sept/oct 1997 | issue #14
modern music | on cue

Where has SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER been?

Why is EVERY DAY LIFE so mad?

Common Children

why did the music change?

Third Day

Value Pac

Living Sacrifice

Zilch

Miss Angie

The Huntingtons

P.O.D.

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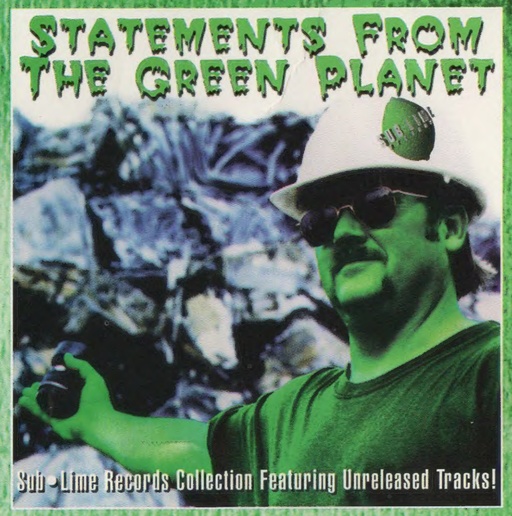
Statements From The Green Planet



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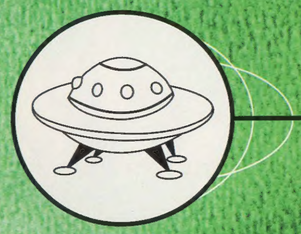

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SEPTEMBER
OCTOBER
1997
ISSUE #14

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It's been a while since I read a *7ball* and then I picked up the May/June '97 one. Wow! Even better than I remember! It's got so many more pages and it seems that you're no longer afraid to let it be known that you're a Christian magazine.

Meghan

Thanks Meg. And thanks for detecting our subtle switch from focusing on bass fishing to Christian alternative music.

I'm interested in alternative Christian music. Whenever I'm going to buy a Christian CD that I'm not familiar with, I always do two things: 1. Look to see if both the band and the individual members give some praise or thanks to God, and 2. Look at the lyrics for mentioning "God" or "Jesus." I know a band is spiritually grounded when I see these two things.

Jeremy Reiss

If you're considering buying a Christian disc, while you're listening to the demo at the store (or a friend's copy), check inside the front cover, where the band normally thanks everyone from mom and dad to the store that sold them their first guitar. If they have taken the time to list God in their "credits," then the disc is definitely worth a spin.

If not, then your money is better [spent] than that. If a band who claims to be "Christian" doesn't bother to thank their Heavenly Father, then this shows where their heart really is.

Erik Lundeen
ejlundeen@aol.com

Jeremy & Erik: It's right of you to want to purchase music which has spiritual integrity. But common sense should tell you there is no way you can "know a band is spiritually grounded" from reading lyrics or liner notes. That's not a judgment that even those closest to an artist can make. That's the prerogative of God alone. In some cases, the artists don't write their own notes, and in nearly all instances, artists do not have the final edit of those notes. While you can certainly gather info as to whether or not an artists's work is appropriate for you to enjoy, it's dangerous to take that info into the area of pronouncing something right or wrong for others. And liner notes are certainly no spiritual yardstick for gauging the depth of someone's faith.

EVERYONE'S A CRITIC

I have just recently discovered your magazine. I LOVE it. It's hard to find what you need to know about Christian music. That's why I find the mag so appealing. Everything is in there, and I mean everything. I especially like the reviews. They're honest, and very helpful.

stratton@logantele.com

I really think your reviews need a lot of improvement. I've counted nearly 50 reviews in the last three issues, and all of the reviews were positive. I highly doubt that all of the CDs you said were so good actually are. If you take a look at a *Rolling Stone* or *Spin*, you will find positive and negative reviews. Don't always focus on the positive. If the music stinks, say so, don't say the album has great lyrics, tell me the thing stinks before I shell over some of my hard earned money for a disc that will wind up in the trash can in a week.

Derek Eshelman
chino4@juno.com

I just wanted to let you guys know that I think you are doing a great job with *7ball*. The reviews are awesome and so honest. It really helps me with my CD purchasing.

Jeff Clochesy
Punk4Jesus@aol.com

I've just recently gotten involved in Christian music at a deeper level than your average listener. I work for Starbucks Coffee in Beaverton, Ore. and I've been fortunate enough to have artists like Christine Glass and Plumb play in our store. I want the people out there to understand something about Christian artists, and that is: THEY WORK VERY VERY hard. Please buy their CDs. Please show your support by buying tickets to the concerts and showing up. If you like Christian music, do your best to support the artists financially.

Todd Van Lom
vanlom@europa.com

Just a quick note to say "thank you" for the wonderful article in the new *7ball*. It was very well written, and we appreciated your perspective on what Jars of Clay wants to be about. Thanks to Frank for spending all that time with us in London, and being a sport about the crazy schedule, and to Chris and Bruce for helping to write a great piece. I wish the magazine much success.....and again, thanks for your support and time.

stephen of the jars

We bought your mag with the CD in it (Hype issue)—loved it. We play the CD regularly on our radio show in Australia. Keep up the great work and we are looking forward to future issues.

Matt and Lisa Prater :)

(We reserve the right to edit letters for length, clarity and to avoid litigation.)

7ball magazine
september/october 1997
number 14

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VOX PUBLISHING, 1997
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NASHVILLE, TN 37214
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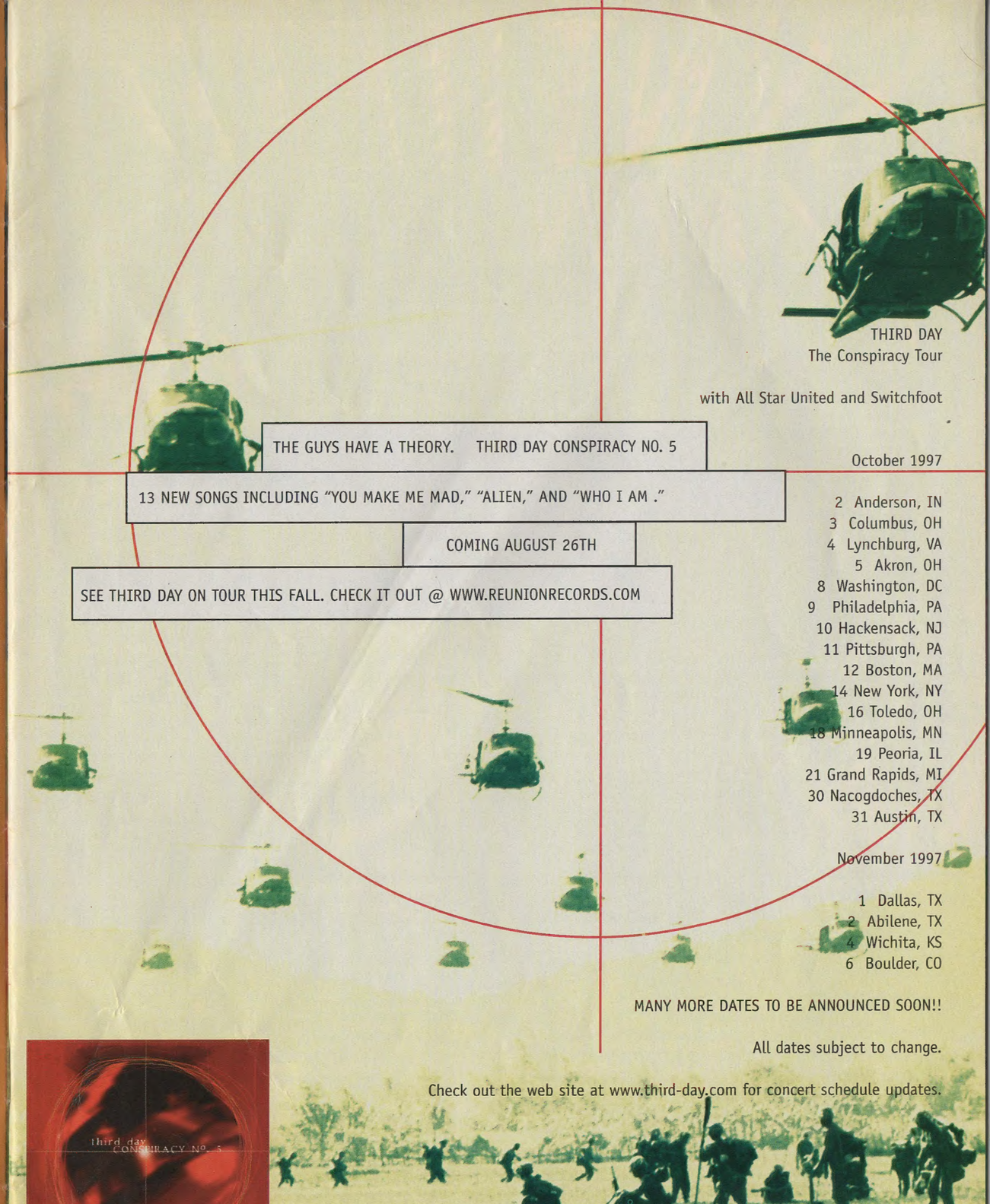


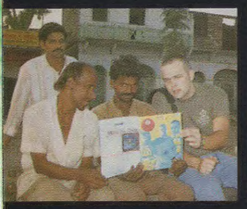
SYNTHETIC SEVEN NEWS

PlankEye has a pretty big-deal headline tour this fall, with guests **Seven Day Jesus** and **Fold Zandura**. "The One and Only Rock 'n' Roll Paradise Tour" will feature a Hawaiian-themed stage set (with palm trees, Hawaiian shirts and a volcano). The tour begins in October, which coincides with PlankEye's latest, The One and the Only. Seven Day Jesus' next album is due December.

The new Jars of Clay record, Much Afraid, is available as a limited-edition (20,000 copies) 12" vinyl. It will release one week before the CD version, which hits stores mid-September.

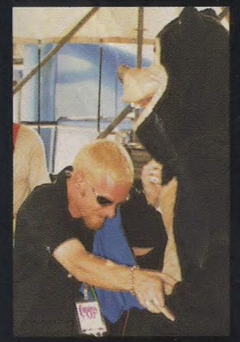
Joey Bellville (Echoing Green) is working with **Jerome** of **Fold Zandura** on a new electronica-sounding record (the kids understand). A maxi-single will be out by the end of the year, with a full project early next year.

The "WWJD" bracelet phenomenon sweeping the nation has got itself a soundtrack—What Would Jesus Do? features something like 16 artists (including **Grammatrain, Sarah Masen, dc Talk** and **Smalltown Poets**). The project includes one brand-new song each from **Big Tent Revival** (the title track) and **Skillet**. The campaign includes a youth devotional Bible, and an exclusive "WWJD" bracelet in the spine of the disc.



"Clayton King of Boiling Springs, NC, trying desperately to get his copy of *7ball* back from the locals."

If you're having trouble explaining to your friends what some Christian rock bands are like, there is a new resource on the web: **The Music Recommendation Chart**—found at **[www.gofishnet.com]**—is NOT a "sounds like" chart, but rather says, "You might like this artist if you like these other artists." Fans can add their own recommendations to be considered for the chart, too.



"Frank takes the time to pray with a bear."

King's X is negotiating a three album record deal with Metal Blade Records. Look for new music from the trio soon. Meanwhile, **Ty Tabor** has a solo album available, naomi's solar pumpkin. See the official KX web site at **[www.compassnet.com/grump]** for more information.

Geoff Moore gets back to his rock 'n' roll roots with Threads, which includes a respectable cover of The Who classic "I'm Free." Moore & The Distance are on tour RIGHT THIS MOMENT (well, right about now) with **Smalltown Poets** and **Out of Eden**. The tour, strongly oriented toward youth evangelism, offers vouchers for free tickets to youth groups to encourage local ministry. Youth pastors can get more info at the official web site at **[www.geoffmoore.com]**.

Those wacky Canadian boys in **Hokus Pick** have an all-new, never-released-anywhere-before album, Snappy, a great guitar pop record like Pick used to make. The first video, "I'm So Happy," is a hoot, as well. Bonus points are awarded for the zany radio drama tucked away at the end of the disc. Surf on over to their fab web site at **[www.hokuspick.com]** for all sorts of goodies.

In other news from the Great White North, **One Hundred Days** is working on a new record,

"There's not a man, woman or child alive who doesn't enjoy a cold, refreshing beverage."

promising a more modern rock bent. It should be in stores next spring. Look for their new web site at **[www.golden.net/~tanrocks/]**.

Metro One has signed **Spoken**, a new rap core band that should appeal to fans of Downset and Rage Against The Machine. Look for their disc to drop early October.

Congratulations to **Insyderz** lead vocalist **Joe Yerke** on his engagement to girlfriend Leslie. The proposal took place backstage at a concert in Windsor, Ontario.

Congratulations to **ZJAM Interactive Radio** for becoming the "largest Christian rock show in history," now airing live for two hours each week on 132 stations. The show, celebrating its first year on the air, can be reached at **[zjam.com]** on the Internet.

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SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER

NONE THE WISER?

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By Doug Brumley

It's early June 1997, and Matt Slocum has just returned from a concert trip to New Mexico with his band, Sixpence None the Richer. As he struggles to bring his luggage and guitars into the Nashville apartment, he breaks the news: "Well, it's official," he says. "We're out of our deal."

Matt's rather nonchalant delivery didn't do the news justice. It was the moment Sixpence and its fans had been waiting for nearly two years. The band was finally set for the release of a new album, with a new record label. It seemed things were at last looking up for the trio of vocalist Leigh Nash, drummer Dale Baker and guitarist Slocum.

After establishing themselves as the pop darlings of the alternative set—they had shared the stage with the likes of 10,000 Maniacs and The Smithereens, among others—their record company, R.E.X. Music, was hit with financial troubles. The company ceased operations. Platinum Entertainment purchased and resurrected R.E.X., but the band and the new label owners could not agree on contract matters.

During that time, Sixpence also decided to part ways with producer and manager Armand J. Petri. They did so not because the members were unhappy with Armand's work but, as Matt explains, "We felt like we'd sort of outgrown that relationship." Then, following a Fall '96 performance at Nashville's Caffe Milano, Matt received a flattering answering machine message from artist/producer Steve Taylor, who'd attended the show and had been overwhelmed by what he'd seen. After a few meetings, it was decided that Taylor would produce Sixpence's next album, but only if the R.E.X. situation was settled.

On October 9, 1996, Taylor accompanied Sixpence to a meeting with Platinum. At that meeting, Platinum and Sixpence remained firmly entrenched in their positions. As the impasse dragged into early 1997, the band members began considering futures without Sixpence.

Dale nearly left the band to drum for another band, but decided to stay after a discussion with Matt. "I was trying to think ahead and look ahead at what other opportunities might be open for me," Dale explains.

"I could probably stand to have a better business mind," he continues, "but it seems like I've always chosen bands to play in because I thought it would help me grow artistically, not because it was going to pay better than my last gig."

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Soon thereafter, bassist J.J. Plasencio left to join the band Plumb. The parting was amicable, as J.J. agreed to play bass on the new album and finish a list of scheduled concerts. Still, his departure left the remaining members disheartened.

"I think we were all pretty close to hanging the whole thing up," Matt admits.

Leigh confesses that her doubts also ran deep. "For me, it was the constant questioning of what I was supposed to be doing, or what was going to happen in the future," she says.

Through the winter months Matt was writing new material. Last February, the band secretly began preproduction on their third full-length album, with Taylor at the helm. Ironically, the studio was located directly next door to the Platinum offices.

In late May, Sixpence and Platinum met once again, this time to work out Sixpence's release from their contract. After the deal was finalized, the band officially announced, before the mainstage crowd at this year's Creation Festival, that a new album would be out in the fall.

The new album will be self-titled and released on Steve Taylor's newly created (and yet unnamed) label. Musically, the new material retains that trademark Sixpence None the Richer sound, but migrates from pop to more complex arrangements. Some songs blend from one to another without a hard break, hearkening back to The Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.

This new musical direction can be largely credited to Matt's listening tastes over the past six months or so. Instead of radio-friendly pop, he's maintained a steady diet of classical pieces and albums that exhibit a broad range of instrumentation.

"It doesn't seek to take you on a short journey of three minutes," says Matt of classical music. "It takes you on like a whole journey over a longer period of time. I think once you taste that, it expands your mind and you want more out of music, as opposed to just a 3-minute pop melody."

Strings are prevalent throughout; pedal steel guitar, trumpet, accordion and organ also embellish the band's traditional four-piece setup. "It's a lot harder to categorize," Dale says. "You can't just say that it's alternative rock or whatever."

And while the new material displays a more mature musical approach, it also features lyrics and themes which show a more spiritually mature Sixpence None the Richer, as well.

"We try to deal more in concrete things, as opposed to abstracts and obscure lyrics," Matt says. "I think that has a lot to do with our journey of faith and realizing that an abstraction may sound pretty but it doesn't do anything for people."

Leigh believes a lot of the darker tones of the band's previous work are lighter on this new offering. "Matt and I have gotten a lot closer in the last couple of years. So I've kinda gone through some of the pain with him, and it's really interesting because it's not focused on as much in these songs."

The down time was tough for the band, but each of the members looked to God for patience and hope throughout the ordeal. They all credit prayer and a pursuit of God's will as the keys to keeping a positive attitude. Even then it wasn't all rosy.

"You have to extract yourself from it all and realize that it's not really that big of a deal in the scheme of things," says Matt. "Your friendships and your relationship with God are ultimately the most important things. But that didn't happen as often as it should have."

Leigh says she had to constantly remind herself to leave the situation in God's hand. "It made me for the first time say, God, if you don't want Sixpence to be a part of my life or exist at all anymore, then let it be. Just completely take over. I honestly did not want to see myself go the way that was not in God's will."

Not surprisingly, these themes make their presence known on the forthcoming album. "It starts with the theme of falling in love with your problems and coming to a point where you've forgotten how things used to be happy and joyful," says Matt. "It also deals with themes of waiting for God to come to you and the patience incurred in that. And just seeking God when He doesn't seem to be around."

Looking ahead, the members of Sixpence None the Richer hope to fill the vacant bassist position and add a rhythm guitarist in the near future. With new management, a new label and a new album, the band knows what to expect of the coming year: It will be busy.

"I think a huge step for us is just to have a record come out," Matt says. "We'll probably do a small tour from there.

"As far as '98, it's going to be one of those hectic intense years of promoting a record. I hope when all the smoke clears that we've really made a name for ourselves all over the world, not just in Christian music, but in mainstream music, as well."

THE BAND (AT LAST!) MOVES CAUTIOUSLY INTO ITS NEXT PHASE.

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REAL LIFE MUSIC

THE RESURRECTION OF A GENERATION

We're on the road, continuing our journey with **Audio Adrenaline.** The band has a day off so we check into Cross Country Inn near Columbus, Ohio, eat lunch and play a rowdy game of golf.

Later we head to Capri Lanes, where we talk about the Church and its effectiveness today, in between rounds of bowling. Pastor Jim asks the group what sort of atmosphere someone would find if they walk into one of our churches.

"I think a lot of people are looking for a relationship with God, but they won't necessarily come to church," says Rachel.

But what about the people who do happen into our churches? What do they find?

"I believe that the church family is cool, but in many of the churches I see, there seems to be a lot of prejudging going on," asserts Audio A's Ben. "After I became a Christian, I went into a church and felt like people had this attitude, like Why's he here? It really bothers some people if you walk in with long hair or two earrings."

Mark asks his bandmate if he really feels that he's being judged when he walks into a church. "Oh yeah, people stare or walk by and keep quiet," explains Ben.

Jim then asks Ben, "Do you want people to walk up and hug you?"

"I don't want them to talk behind my back, or think certain thoughts," Ben responds. "I know you can't take people's thoughts away, but they shouldn't assume an attitude or prejudgment about a person."

"The church should be a place that's open to everybody," Ben continues, and Lisa agrees. "If the church is not doing that, then they are not doing their job. Jesus accepted everyone, no matter what they looked like," she says.

"I think we should be more concerned about introducing people to Christ than we are about the way we look, or traditionalism," Mark states. "I think we should respect our elders, but at what point do you say, Isn't the church about meeting people's needs, feeding the hungry and introducing people to Christ?"

Does the church really place too much importance on the way people look?

"It might have something to do with where I grew up," admits Ben, "but I don't get the whole thing about dressing up on Sunday. What about being yourself? You should present your best to God 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If that were the case, then you should always dress up for Him, not just on Sundays."

"What if grandma needs you to dress up, in order for her to worship," Jim interjects.

Vicki interjects, "I don't care what people think. It's between God and me—that's it." "Where do you draw the line with what other people think?" asks Jim.

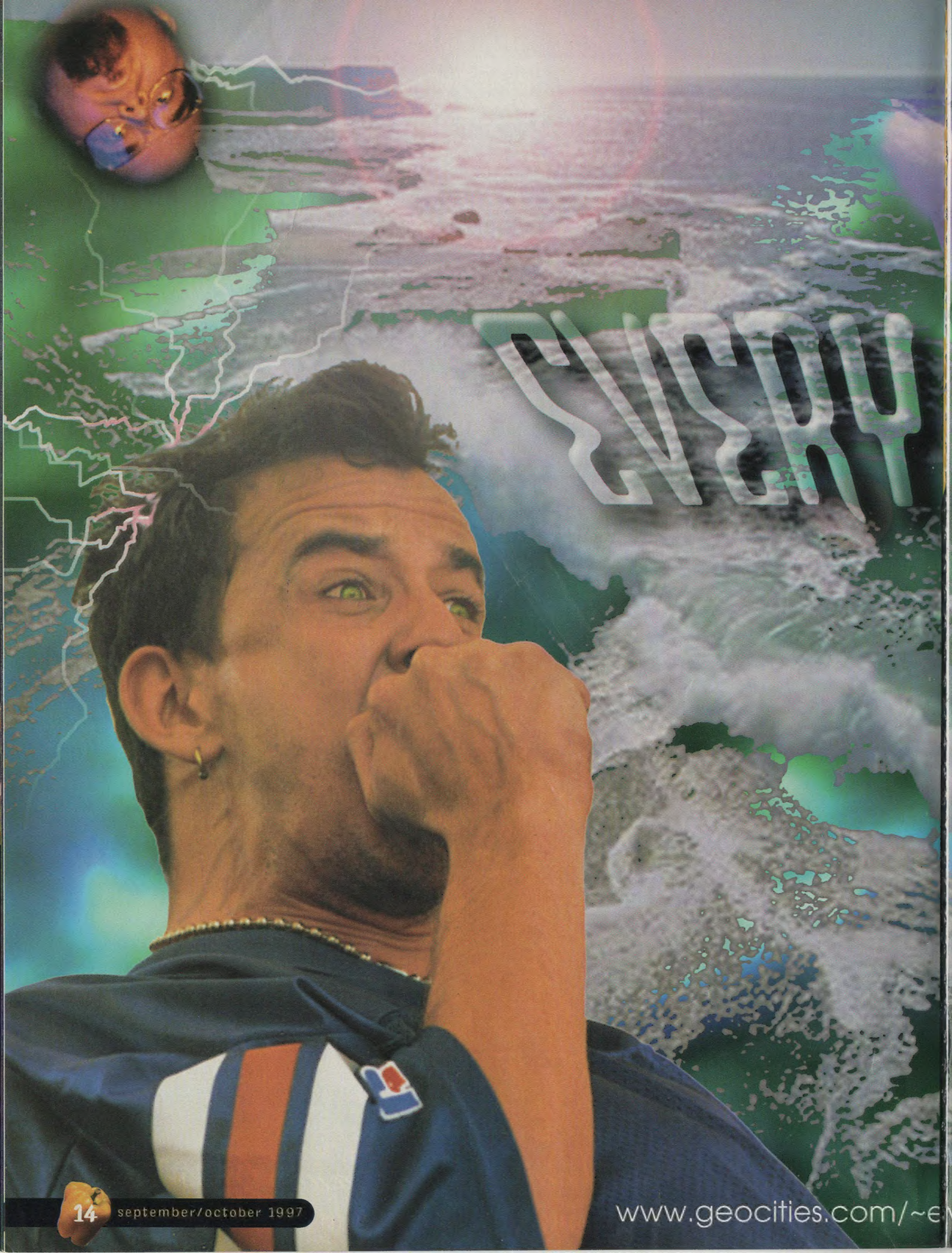
"I think there is a point where respect comes into play," Mark answers. "If you have been a Christian for a while and you know there are believers who are offended by what you wear to church, yet you choose to go to church dressed like that, then I think there are times when respect needs to be taken into consideration. I do feel that churches need to be less involved with the way people look."

"Churches are supposed to be like hospitals—for the sick, or for the people who need it, not only for the fellowship of Christ," concludes Chad. "Jesus helped prostitutes, lepers or anybody that needed help. They weren't dressed up."

—Ginny McCabe

Audio Adrenaline took seven people on the road, along with Pastor Jim Burgen, to discuss issues relevant to this generation. Meet the people— Chad Angone (Littleton, CO), Rachel Eichenberger (Cincinnati, OH), Vicki Laine (Danville, CA), Scotia Little (Bowie, MD), David Liggitt (Dallas, TX), Lisa Sampson (Huntington Beach, CA) and John Whitton (Mission Viejo, CA)— who hit the road with Audio Adrenaline members Mark Stuart, Bob Herdman, Will McGinnis and Ben Cissell. Watch for the book *Some Kind of Journey: 7 Days, 7 Issues, 7 Souls—On the Road with Audio Adrenaline* (available in October), and the *Some Kind of Zombie* AVCD single, available August 26, in Christian bookstores everywhere.

AUDIO ADRENALINE



www.geocities.com/~everydaylife

TEDD COOKERLY TELLS US WHY HE CAN'T STOP SHOUTING.

DAY LIFE

RIGHTEOUS ANGER

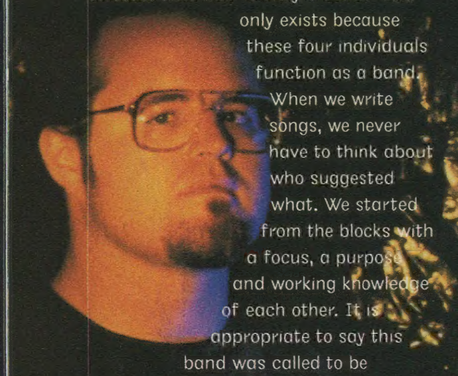
By Bruce A. Brown

Not many artists can lay claim to helping define a new musical genre. But then, not many are as original as Long Beach, Calif.'s Every Day Life.

The band plays what many refer to as "rap core," which features an aggressive, intense, almost industrial musical bed, over which the vocalist/rapper lays down the message. However, according to founder Tedd Cookerly, the launching of Every Day Life had more to do with providence and "throwing down some freestyle jams" than it did becoming musical pioneers.

"Carl [Weaver-guitar], Eric [Wilkins-drums] and I started having these freestyle sessions about five years ago. The original name of the sessions was 'Every Day Life in Southern California.' We got the chance to do a few live shows, and when the other musical endeavors we were involved with fell apart, we became what is now known as EDL."

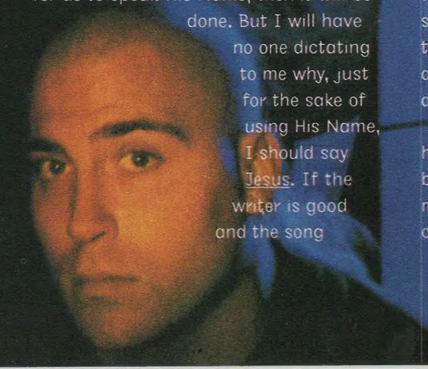
After working with a few different bass players, the current EDL lineup, featuring Oxx (just Oxx) on bass, solidified about 18 months ago. Despite his high visibility as frontman, Cookerly stresses that EDL is truly a band. "EDL only exists because these four individuals function as a band. When we write songs, we never have to think about who suggested what. We started from the blocks with a focus, a purpose and working knowledge of each other. It is appropriate to say this band was called to be together by Christ."



On stage, Every Day Life assaults the audience with a wall of sound, driven by waves of bass, shards of distorted guitar and relentless drum patterns. Riding over the top is Cookerly's voice, which alternately growls and screams out the lyrics to EDL's probing and incisive songs. Cookerly emphasizes there is nothing contrived about the emotions he expresses. "It's an honest passion that many will mistake for anger because they have never seen it [emotion] expressed like this. The words that I write are something that I am trying to get across, and I want people to understand exactly how I feel. Certain words are written so that I may scream what is in my heart."

Although the parameters of rap core are still being defined, Cookerly is quick to emphasize that there is a "West Coast sound." "When you grow up in a community like Long Beach that has such a wealth of culture, and you mix that with drive-by shootings that happen within a few blocks of your house, it opens up a whole range of things to talk about."

Cookerly says he's fully aware that the extreme nature of EDL's music has drawn criticism from many quarters in the church, including youth pastors and sometimes promoters. He says the band prayerfully considers every aspect of what it does, and tries to deflect that criticism with cooperation. "We look at how the Lord wants us to handle things, and go from there," he explains. "Given the current state of the world, youth pastors usually understand what we're about. Promoters book us because they think we play a good show and are easy to work with. Youth are down for us because we make an honest effort to talk to them and don't try to change them. When I am offstage, I allow myself to be open to the Spirit because someone out there will not agree and will want to talk. I must allow them to express what is on their hearts."



Every Day Life has also drawn fire for the lyrical content of its albums. On the band's newest disc, *American Standard*, you'll find tracks about date rape, the exploitation of Native Americans, slanderous comments made by one's peers and the dubious nature of the music business, to name a few. Cookerly says EDL must write what is on their hearts, even if they don't insert the industry-accepted prerequisite uses of "Jesus" and "God" in the lyrics. "It has never been our position that Christ would be prostrated to gain industry status and give foundation to our Christianity," he states. "Should we, and more importantly, Christ, find the need for us to speak His Name, then it will be done. But I will have no one dictating to me why, just for the sake of using His Name, I should say Jesus. If the writer is good and the song stands on its own, why should you do that? It is a complete disrespect of the Lord and should have no place at all in this industry. But it happens so repeatedly that it's become commonplace. Now, no one knows if the music is good or if they just love the Lord so much that they applaud bad songs.

"This is something people don't want to hear," Cookerly realizes. "We often find ourselves at the bad end of a bitter stick because of it."

Never was that occasional animosity so apparent than at an EDL gig last summer at a Christian dance club, where Cookerly says he received the most painful criticism of his life. "I walked outside the club after the show, and a group of 6 to 8 kids walked up and surrounded me, with Bibles in hand. They began telling me that my actions were like that of the Antichrist, if not the Antichrist himself. I listened to their condemning voices until I thought they were done. All the while, I thought of the scripture which tells us to do all things in love and not anger. I then told them my family and my band were founded on Christ. But this still did not silence them.

"So, in accordance with the Word of God," he continues," I rebuked them in the name of Jesus for their hateful actions toward a fellow believer. All they did was laugh and did not accept the rebuke. I myself have been rebuked in the past; I took it and was humbled. But I never thought I would have to do it to anyone else.

"That night, I cried a lot," he concludes, "because I let these naive sheep influence my walk, and because they did not understand that our God is so wonderful that we could have worked things out. I will never forget that night, and you can bet there will be a song about the incident."

Every Day Life is one of a handful of Christian bands that have become identified with the Straight Edge movement, an offshoot of the punk/hard core music scene of the early '80s.

Many Christian kids subscribe to the basic tenants of Straight Edge, such as abstaining from premarital sex, eschewing drugs, alcohol and tobacco (referred to as "poisons") and adapting a vegetarian diet-all things which are certainly compatible with the Christian faith. Cookerly says that, although EDL supports straight edgers, they don't consider themselves a Straight Edge band. "I don't wear the 'X' [the symbol of Straight Edge] because I am a Christian first and concerned with being poison-free second. For others, they wear the 'X' and proclaim the faith. I have to say that many of them are doing better than a lot of us. We should be proud that these kids welcome being poison-free and sharing the love of Christ."

Every Day Life is beginning to achieve popularity far beyond a hard core audience. For instance, an appearance on the *7ball* stage at this year's Creation festival netted the band fans from outside the alternative scene. A number of Creation staff members who had worked at the event for several years praised the group as turning in one of the best first-time performances in festival history.

The conservative-looking Cookerly, who is frequently asked if he's a friend or guest of the band, says it's all part of EDL's "image," which is no image at all. "We just want to be the guy next door, only playing a style of music you would never expect the guy next door to play."

Cookerly is an extremely articulate writer, with so much to say that one wonders if rock music is a big enough platform for him. "I've never really thought about a pastoral ministry or a public speaking role," Cookerly clarifies. "Actually, I'm surprised I'm still in this band because, until I joined, I never thought I was the type for a music group. But I have thought about writing a book. The idea came up because I've written apologetics for all the song lyrics and I thought, What better way to get across the theme behind an album than giving the public a book to follow?"

Cookerly is a very reserved man, especially given that he fronts one of the most aggressive bands in perhaps *the* most intense subset of rock music. So why does this gentle soul turn into such an explosive performer, prodding and provoking listeners to examine their faith more closely? "Everything I do, I try to do in love," stresses Cookerly. "But there are a few reasons why I push people about their Christianity. I push so hard because I want people to think about how big this Lord we serve is. We sometimes think we're the only ones who face the problems we face. We are so immersed in our relationships and with what this world has for us, that we focus on those things instead of the larger picture. Christ dwells in us so we may better serve Him. I explore these issues so we can all better see what Christ is doing and wants to do for the rest of this sick and dying world."

"If it's all true the only time you fail is the last time you try.

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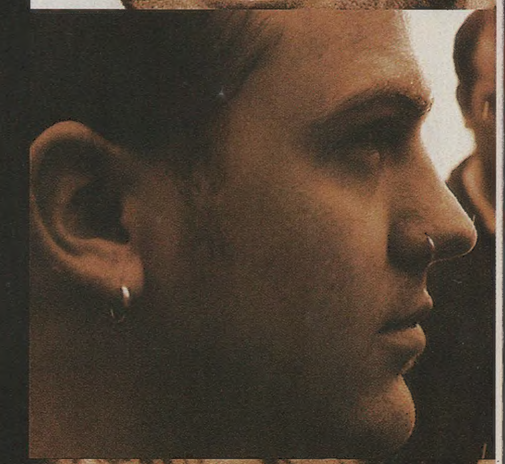

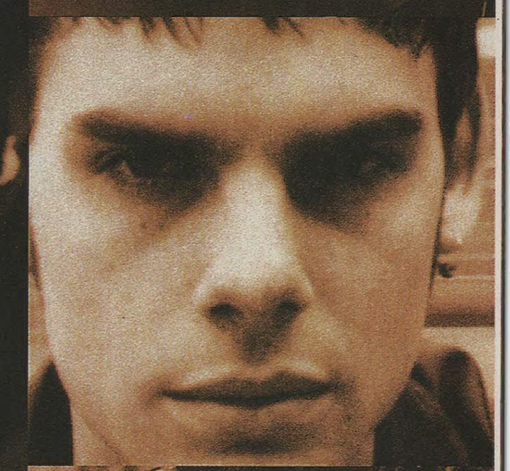

BY CHRIS WELL

THIRD DAY

A new producer and

A

a refreshing beverage...

TAYLOR-MADE

...it's a conspiracy!

GROWTH

WITH A NEW RECORD AND A TRUCKLOAD OF FAN AND CRITICAL PRAISE, the rock 'n' roll band Third Day is poised to take the country by storm. Coca-Cola, the soft drink giant, has taken the world by storm. Both have their roots in Atlanta.

"Always—Third Day," a Coca-Cola ad[illegible] recorded by Third Day, has been [illegible] impressive, but it's just one [illegible] major label debut, released last year, [illegible] The band is headlining a 50-city fall tour [illegible]

And their follow-up, *Conspiracy No. 5*, [illegible] just chock full of surprises. "We don't think it's [illegible] vocalist Mac Powell. "It's just the record [illegible]

The growth in their art comes as a natural extension of their growth as musicians and as Christians. "We've [illegible] record," Powell says. "At least we don't think so."

He emphasizes that the members of Third Day [illegible] know that they are the salt in their tears. "Yet, we realize we don't want to be just Christian consumers. There's a role for people in the body of Christ to encourage each other and we feel we are part of that. I hope our music takes people to a place that had deeper into a relationship with God."

Conspiracy No. 5, which takes its title from the fifth definition of the word "conspiracy"—"any time two or more people are in agreement"—examines the dark and confusing hearts of sinful people, and the need we all have for a gracious and merciful God. However, the package is startling enough that bass player Tai Anderson sometimes finds himself apologizing for the new songs. "It's not correct to separate our passions and our per[illegible] from our relationship with God and say that, unless we are talking spe[illegible]ally about Jesus, we aren't doing a Christian song."

Not only does the new record reveal a stronger, more mature band, it reveals a new vision, as well. "Our vision has become larger than just preaching the Gospel and seeing people get saved," drummer David Carr

says. "We want to see people who aren't gonna get the Gospel anywhere else, they're not gonna go to a church, and they're not gonna go to a Christian festival, or walk into a place where the Gospel's getting preached. We want to see lives changed, lives that haven't come close to seeing God.

One of the benchmarks in the maturity of the band comes in the form of producer Sam Taylor, who has worked with such outside-of-the-box Christian rock bands as Kings X and Galactic Cowboys. Although the band made the "jump" to the new level themselves, Powell maintains that Taylor helped. "He [illegible] big part of this record. He brought out the best in us and our songwriting."

Taylor also contributed to the thick texture [illegible]

[illegible] Day wants to necessarily follow in their footsteps, "we definitely want to take our own course," Anderson says. "We've been with U2 and REM as bands that's cool. They've been around for a while and have been able to do different things and it's still [illegible]. That was kind of the fear after the first record with the Hootie thing. We want to be a band that's able to do different things, which maybe Hootie's not."

"It's frustrating to hear that comparison," Carr says. "If they think we sound like Hootie and the Blowfish, we can't stop that. But it's when people say that we've gone out of our way to make it happen ... I don't think we ever said, What would so and so do here? If you are a genuine artist, you can have the influences, but who you are as an artist and your passions will be reflected in a way that no other band is gonna do."

One spectacular example of drawing on influences is "How's Your Head," a sweet song about Powell calling home from the road and asking if his wife still has a headache. Musically, it wears its Beatles influence proudly. Then Third Day took the reins and made the sound their own.

Anderson thinks [illegible] scientists. "I think it's foolish as a scientist to discount all the accomplishments that have gone on before you and have to make every revelation for yourself," he says. When the band was writing, there were times someone would present an idea and the others would shoot it down because it sounded too much like another band. Then, the producer stepped in. "He said 'All we need to enjoy playing these songs,' Anderson recounts, 'and if this reminds us of something, great. That's not a bad thing, because then you're able to stand on the shoulders of great men ... standing on what they've done to take it a step further.'"

Avery points out that, as we're talking, the music playing overhead has changed. "You can write in there, As Hootie comes over the [illegible]."

"That's the funny thing," Powell says. "Ninety-five percent of the people who compare us to Hootie have no idea that we made our record before theirs was out. I think it was a coincidence ... they were influenced by the same people who influenced us. In fact, people tell me all the time that I sound like Cat Stevens and I can't tell you two Cat Stevens songs. I've never in my life listened to him."

Of course, as they continue to stretch as showmen, as ministers and as a recording band, Third Day is making an impact on the culture themselves. As the conspiracy grows, who knows? Future bands will probably be accused of trying to sound like Third Day.

Sam is not like Dave's we find out. "Christian rock," he's a wet blanket, you wouldn't expect him to be a smoker," and he was very opinionated. He's the guy who goes, please tell me why we're playing [illegible] verses and he wonders what it means in Greek, so he teaches himself to read in Greek and Hebrew. That was the challenging thing—[illegible] with our faith.

Avery sums it up: "Sam, who dives deep into everything he does, challenged us to know exactly why we were doing everything we [illegible] issue until it was [illegible]

It's [illegible] as if the band had a [illegible] understanding of their songs, I suggest, and the process where them [illegible] the songs. Avery agrees. "Sometimes [illegible] passionate about everything and wants us to be so [illegible]

One [illegible] elements of the fusion of theme and music is "My Wake Me Up When [illegible]" [illegible] with its [illegible] [illegible] At one point the [illegible] [illegible] sonic noise [illegible] the song. "We had that bridge in [illegible] he tripled the length [illegible] [illegible] chaos that was [illegible]

Avery [illegible] a [illegible] metaphor. "After the chaotic part [illegible] and there's no direction there and more [illegible] that's [illegible] a chaotic time, a time when [illegible] where you are going, [illegible] [illegible] when you are [illegible] you are on target and you [illegible] it's a thing and you're sure about it."

The obsession and the passion of Third Day—[illegible] the live shows to the [illegible] [illegible] No. 6—bears a similarity to [illegible] the Beatles on their albums [illegible] band. Although there have been several [illegible] made between Third Day and other artists—some less favorable than others—[illegible] comparison that few have noticed is that between Third Day and U2. On stage, the members of the Atlanta band [illegible]

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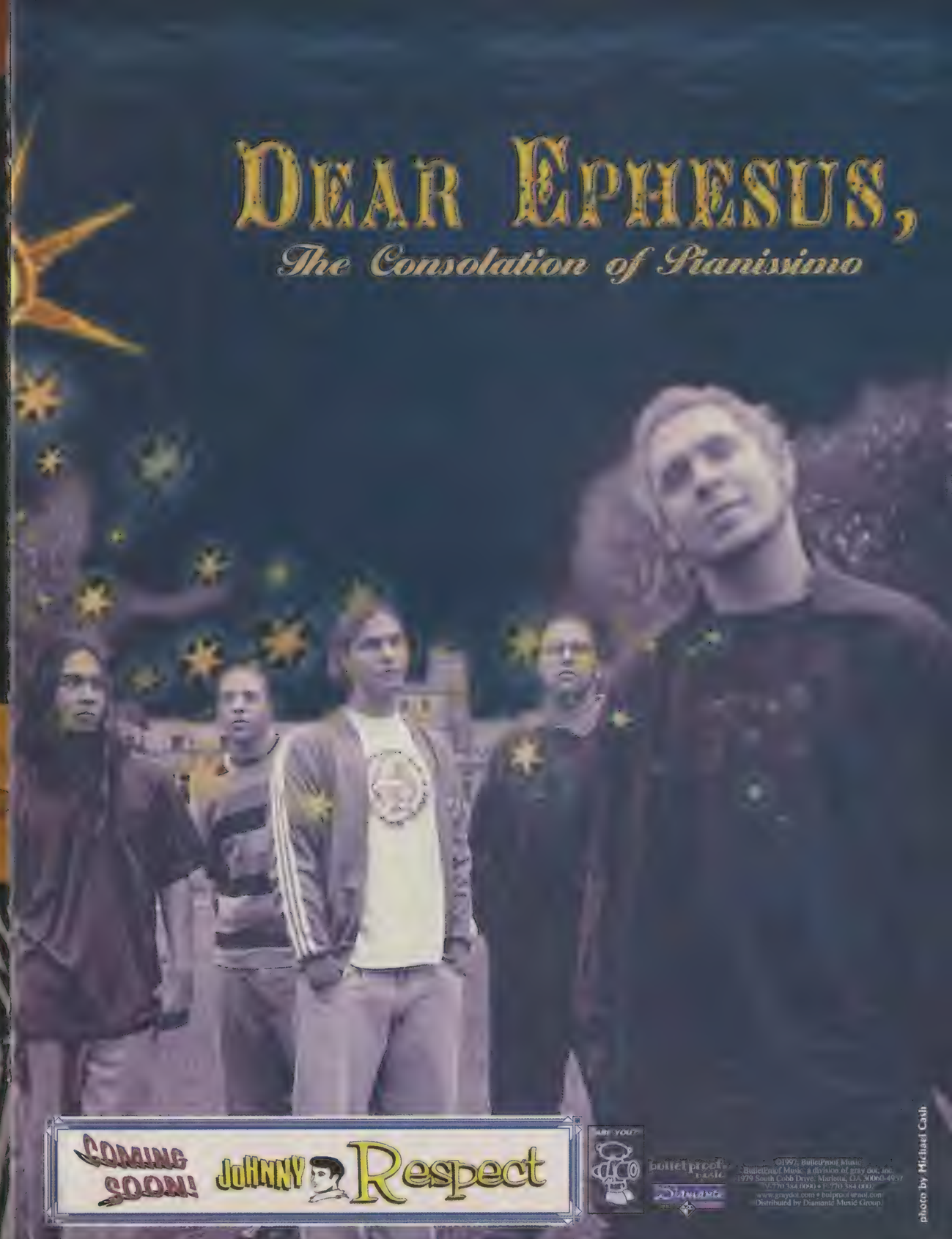

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LIVING SACRIFICE

It's more than 100 degrees inside the converted warehouse that doubles as an indoor skateboard park and triples as an occasional music venue. It's hot, not only because there are at least 600 people inside on this summer night, but also because a choice has to be made. A choice between air conditioning or sound system. And since all these people showed up for the music, sound system wins.

Tonight's show is a homecoming for Living Sacrifice. They've been on the road for a few weeks with P.O.D and they've finally come back to Little Rock, Ark., to debut their new CD for the faithful fans. By all indications, the crowd loves it.

The crowd's response is also a kind of vindication for the band which took some critical heat on past releases for sticking so closely to their metal roots in the age of punk rock and grunge. And it's a relief, too, that there is still a paying audience out there for Living Sacrifice, three years after their last record and two years after their vocalist/bassist split to go to Bible college. Fresh from a sonic makeover, the band now features a tougher, more streamlined hardcore approach.

"This time out, we didn't want to limit ourselves," vocalist Bruce Fitzhugh explains. "We felt like we hadn't made the record we needed to make, not just for us, but for our fans. I mean there's no getting around it, we're a heavy band. Our music is aggressive. But, we want people to approach it without bias as a good heavy record instead of, Oh it's grindcore, or It's a death metal record, because that's very limiting. The Living Sacrifice you may have heard or heard about in the past is not the Living Sacrifice that is happening right now."

In the past, Bruce admits, Living Sacrifice's musical goal was to be "fast and technical and heavy." But as time wore on, they realized there was little point in that approach. "We didn't want to do that with this record. Instead, we tried to go with stuff that sounded cool, stuff we liked. And we tried to write actual songs instead of a bunch of riffs just kind of strung together."

I tell him the word I've been hearing about the new record by fans and critics is "maturity."

"Well that sounds good," Bruce says. "But we're pretty immature still. I thought the songs on our last record, Inhabit, were really good for what they were. A lot of people described it as over-the-top, technical and fast. We loved parts of it, but other parts are so crazy there's nothing to grab onto. With this record, we tried to write for our fans and not for a bunch of musicians."

That "for the fans" approach holds a great deal of significance for the band now. When vocalist/bassist DJ left the group in late '95, Bruce says, the band members were "pretty burned out. The passion for it was really gone." Then, after nearly a year-long break, they started jamming again, this time with guitarist Jason Truby's brother Chris playing bass and with Bruce taking over most of the vocal chores.

Soon after, Living Sacrifice shopped around a new demo, and settled on a deal with Tooth & Nail Records. The band then opted to produce the record themselves at home, with the help of local producer/engineer Barry Poynter.

As the writing and sessions for the record progressed, they found the purpose and excitement that had been missing from the band start to return. Bruce describes that time as "a rebirth. The band found a new zeal, a new fire to play music and glorify God."

It helped them, he said, to refocus their vision and gave them a new enthusiasm to get out and play and have as many people see and hear the band as possible; to let people know what they are doing, as an art form, and a way to share their hearts and convictions.

"It's what God's put inside us to do," Bruce affirms. "We love this music. We grew up listening to this music. We know that kids really latch onto it and take it and go with it.

"We know we want to do what we do so that God can be glorified," he says. "I mean, there's a ton of bands out there that are great, but there's nothing there other than entertainment. We want people to get more out of our records than just really cool music. We want to bless them, encourage them, fill them up, whatever. We're just way more focused now, really. The band has changed a lot in that aspect. The record is entitled Reborn not just for the music, but for us as well."

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COMMON CHILDREN

LESS VOLUME...

...MORE INTENSITY

THE TRIO RETURNS WITH MODERN ROCK FOR A POST-GRUNGE ERA.

By Beth Blinn – When the formation of Tattoo Records was announced almost two years ago, most attention was focused on the critically acclaimed band The Choir, who was signing to the label. Also mentioned in the press release was the signing of a largely unknown trio called Common Children, whose debut album became the first offering of the new company.

The release of Skywire in early 1996 signaled that Tattoo had signed two outstanding bands. With their blend of sensitive, literate lyrics and driving, dynamic rock, Common Children quickly started drawing the positive attention of both critics and fans. The trio spent time on the road opening for The Choir on the Free Flying Soul tour, and followed that with a round of festival dates and a two-month stint touring with Believable Picnic. They also garnered a good deal of mainstream attention, via the use of their music on ESPN and MTV.

So what does a band that's developed a reputation for hard-hitting rock 'n' roll do for a follow-up? To find out, I went to Neverland recording studio in Nashville to get a preview of Common Children's second album, Delicate Fade, and talk with

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each of the band members.

Common Children was formed about five years ago. Lead singer and guitarist Marc Byrd and bassist Drew Powell met at a Bible college in Arkansas. After they graduated, they connected with drummer Hampton Eugene.

The group played clubs for about three years before finding a manager and moving to Nashville. At the 1995 Cornerstone festival, they played the *7ball* stage, making a big impression. Shortly after Cornerstone, Derri Daugherty and fellow Choir members Steve Hindalong & Dan Michaels (who had recently started working with Tattoo Records) saw the band, and Michaels eventually offered Common Children a contract.

When Skywire was reviewed by the critics, the name Nirvana was tossed around a lot—mainly due to the song "Hate," which features Byrd screaming at the top of his lungs. Knowing that most artists dislike being labeled—especially with another band's name—I ask Byrd how he deals with that sort of thing. "You make another record and you make them be quiet," he responds with a small smile.

With *Delicate Fade*, Eugene, Powell and Byrd have created a thing of beauty that is every bit as intense as its predecessor—just not as loud.

"There's a lot of versatility on this album, which may seem like, Okay, which way do we want to go?," admits Powell. "But we feel all of these things; why not go ahead and put them down? You worry, Maybe it's too mellow, but I think it's important that you [as the artist] really enjoy listening to it."

"[There is the] hope that your fans will embrace your growth," says Byrd. "So many times you hear, Well, I like the first album, and then after that ... I've learned to be a lot more patient with artists and bands I really like, because I realize they're figuring out who they are, just like I am."

But the desire to push the boundaries of what they had been doing was there. "I think that consciously, as a band, we wanted to be more musical,"explains Byrd, "and if the lyrics are going to be a little more introspective and deeper, we needed music to back it up."

Byrd suggests we live in a post-grunge era. "People compare us to Nirvana because of the 'Hate' song and because of the screaming. We just did not want that at all, so we made a conscious decision [to go another way]."

The shift in sound was not an easy move for the band to make. Going into the studio with Hindalong, there were plenty of questions in their minds. "Musically and lyrically, I went into this with two poetry books full of thoughts and journals and notes I'd taken on the road," Byrd says. "But I was really insecure about pulling off musically what we wanted to do and me pulling off lyrically what I wanted to do."

Byrd says he feels the title exemplifies the redemptive nature of the album. "I think it captures what life is about: It is a delicate fade, in the sense that you're living, yet you're dying—so treat it delicately. Because your fade out could be slow, or it could be sudden. Ultimately it's our hope as Christians that in the end, it's all going to make sense, it's all going to be worth it."

A stronger tone of hope was something the band really wanted to get across on this album. Powell says, "To us, we felt like there were a few hopeful songs [on the last album], but it might have been hard to see. Just in this last year, even though we've been through a lot of hard things, I think God's allowed us to see His grace, and a little more of a positive side—at least, He has with me. It just feels like there's more of a refreshing spirit about it."

Matching music to the lyrics and concepts stretched each of the musicians. Instead of the propulsive aggressiveness used on the last album,

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Common Children pushed for a more subtle intensity. "The drums tend to be a very aggressive kind of release for me," says Eugene. "But for this I had to get into the whole groove element, the rhythmic progression of the song. I had to try to filter that energy. This album was a little more demanding, doing these intense kinds of grooves."

All three band members are well aware of the unstable nature of the music business. While they wouldn't mind being given the opportunity to do it full-time, the motivation to help people and use their talents for God is what keeps them going.

Eugene, who holds a degree in psychology as well as quite a few credits in education, relishes the opportunities he gets to talk to kids about the importance of finding out who God wants them to be. "So many times kids say Yeah, I either want to be in film, or maybe music, and I have to share with them that there's so much purpose in whatever you do," says Eugene. "There's people out there who have skills, whether they're a plumber, electrician or whatever, who are happy as a lark, and they serve a purpose. I believe in missions, but at the same time, it's in how we serve man that we glorify Christ."

Being on the road has afforded the group an opportunity to talk to people who have been affected by their music. "'Broken Smile,' on the last record, has had a serious impact on some people, according to the emails and talking to people at concerts," Byrd says. But what is truly humbling, he says, is when someone comes up after a show who really liked "that acoustic song" on Skywire. One woman said it was the soundtrack of her and her husband's life for the previous four months, since their 4-month-old infant died. "You don't know what to say. You're just dumbfounded that this song, about personal loss in my life—the loss of my friend—and all about death, and how things fade in life, how that song [affected them]. The most traumatic thing that will probably ever happen to them and every time they play that song, they will think of that. That's not a sermon; it's not some theological exegesis of Scripture; it's just a song. I think lyrics that provoke thought, combined with music that is moving, are just powerful."

Through the experience of the past couple of years, Powell has developed a growing recognition of his responsibility as an artist. "I think in the last few years, seeing the power that music has, seeing how it can touch people and how God can use it has really affected me. It's very spiritual a lot of the time. I feel like God gave me a talent and that I really should do all that I can with it.

"There's definitely a feeling of grace, of mercy [about the album]," Byrd sums up. "I am a seriously shame-based, guilt-ridden person. I remember a counselor that I had telling me God wants to show you His grace, and that He loves you. He wants to show you His love. And I think I'm starting to see that more and more. I think that the first record was a working through of those things, and this one is a beginning of the resolution. And it will continue to resolve. But I'm certainly not going to get up there and sing the usual, Sunday school songs that don't deal with reality. Because we live in a fallen world. I think that, for right now, *Delicate Fade* captures right where we are."

Producer Steve Hindalong has worked with a number of well-respected bands in the Christian market. So it is no small praise when he says that *Delicate Fade* is one of the best projects he's ever done.

"It wasn't an easy record to make," Hindalong says, "because the guys couldn't be described as laid-back, especially Marc—he's very intense. So the music is extremely intense. And I felt a lot of pressure this time, because they are probably the best band I've ever worked with."

He continues, "I think that this is one of the best, if not the best, record I've ever worked on—definitely in the top three. The scope is really broad, musically, which might be criticized by some people and embraced by others. It's moody, it's melodic, it's got a real pop sensibility and then a couple of things are more hard-edged. That may strike some people as out of place, but it's just part of the band."

Hindalong says that the project was important to him because "I knew going in, the level of songwriting had really matured. Over the past year, I think there was a lot of personal growth on Marc's part—he's been through a lot of things his whole life—they all have. So they bring a lot of tension to the music and that, to me, is what makes them great."

"I've really grown to love Marc's voice," he states. "I really set out to make this album vocally ambitious. [The band was] less resistant to harmonies. It really turned into a beautiful record, vocally."

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BANKSHOTS

Zilch

by Bruce A Brown

For those of you who're unfamiliar with '60s musical lore, consider the story of The Monkees. Four actor/musicians with completely dissimilar backgrounds answer a casting call for a new television show about ... four actor/musicians. But in the process of getting to know one another, they actually become a real pop group. The saga of Zilch—Jason Halbert (keys/vocals), Otto Price (bass/vocals), and Mark Townsend (guitar/vocals)—plays out much the same. Three musicians, part of the backing band for dc Talk, discover they want to continue performing and ministering together, even when dc Talk isn't on the road. But as Townsend, who came into the fold during the Jesus Freak tour, explains, "we didn't want to do a project as the dc Talk band. We wanted to become a real band with a chance to do shows." Zilch's intention caught the attention of several labels before they even began recording, signed a contract with Gotee Records. The fact that the label is headed by dc Talk's Toby McKeehan is bound to garner the group some criticism, but Price says the group is grateful to the label.

"We don't believe we'd have this platform if it wasn't for touring with dc Talk, so it's definitely out of those loyalties."

One of most frequent judgments leveled at dc Talk is that "it isn't really a band." The members of Zilch are fully aware of the criticism, and to a certain extent, they agree. "dc Talk chose us to be their backing musicians. But we made the decision to form this band," says Halbert. "What we shared was a goal of wanting to continue the ministry when dc Talk was off the road. At this point, they're not doing altar calls anymore because it's unfeasible, with the size of crowds they're playing to. But we're like, Man, we could still do this in smaller churches."

All three men are excited to be starting a new band at the grassroots level. Price says, "There's not this intense pressure on us to become a best-selling band because we have a side career with dc Talk. We can actually concentrate on going out and performing a great show and talking to kids and being a ministry."

Price adds that one important goal Zilch has is taking the music back to the church. "All of us come from a strong church background. And I think because of the focus of sharing Christ, our motives are ministry and music is the vehicle we use to get there."

The three are quick to joke about what constitutes the "Zilch sound," while conceding that they don't have all that much in common musically. "Mark's main concern was to not sound like dc Talk," explains Halbert, "which after playing with them four years was hard for me. Mark loves pure '60s music, whereas I love modern production, and Otto's on a different level. The main thing was just to try to come up with a common sound of what Zilch would be."

Townsend, for his part, was impressed by how their diverse tastes gelled in the studio. "When we formed Zilch, I was amazed by the way this group of individual talents checked their egos at the door and came to the table with a common goal of making a unique record. We came to find out that there really is a Zilch sound."

Besides evoking memories of '60s pop music, the sound on Zilch's debut disc has a distinctly modern rock flavor, via the influence of artists like Jellyfish, The Rembrandts, The Posies and Matthew Sweet. Mostly, says Halbert, it's just happy music.

"We're not really angry about anything. We're happy guys. We have great wives, great kids, we're doing what we love to do for a living. So we're not dealing with any tremendous issues."

That's not to suggest that Zilch's debut album is without its serious side. For instance, the song "In the Sky" refers back to recent mainstream hits, as a way of putting God in His rightful place. "It seems like secular music is addressing a lot of spiritual questions, or at least asking questions," muses Halbert. "And it seems like a lot of secular music right now is portraying God as this abstract being, as in Joan Osborne's 'One Of Us.' We're saying that, yes, He was one of us. He was here and we're addressing that."

Price, Halbert and Townsend all concede that they'd love to see Zilch become very successful. But in case that doesn't happen, says Halbert, they took the preemptive step of poking fun at themselves, with both the band's name and the CD title, Platinum. "We're trying to set expectations pretty low with the band name," Halbert laughs. "Then we wanted to do the whole Platinum idea as sort of anti-Zilch. It's poking fun at ourselves, poking fun at the whole attempt to achieve superstar status. We're appointing ourselves superstars with a Platinum album. That basically means Zilch!" And how could Zilch top a title like Platinum? Easy, says Halbert. "Our next album will be Zilch's Greatest Hits Vol. 2 and then for our third album we'll do Zilch, The Remixes."

Miss Angie

not hard to believe that Angie Turner has music in her blood.

"My dad was always in Christian rock bands when I was little," she says, phoning from her home in Sprucefield, Missouri. "When I was little, I traveled all over the place with my parents doing evangelistic work. We were sort of like the Partridge Family singing and playing all over, just setting up a little stage in parking lots and playing for anybody.

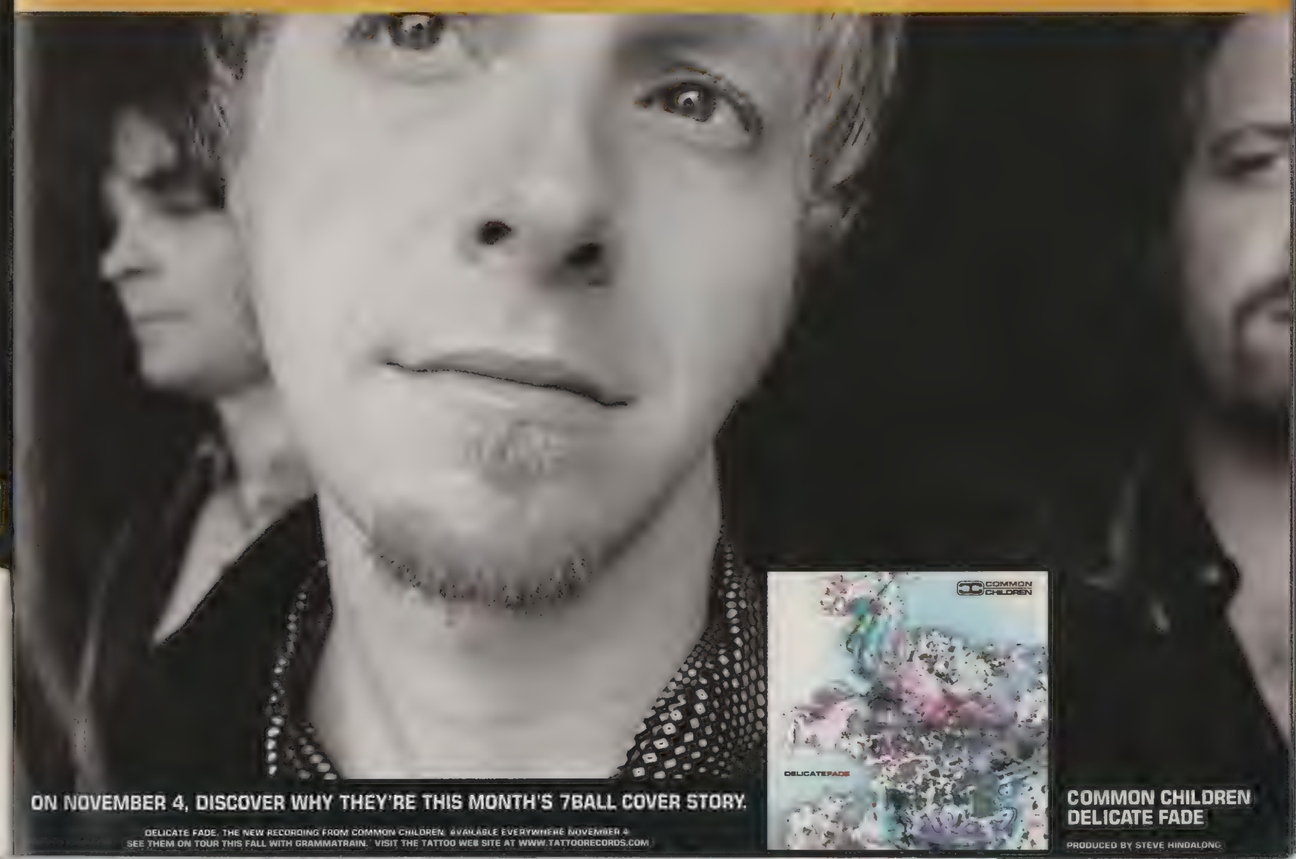
"Though I enjoyed her family's life, she says life wasn't just [illegible] didn't miss out on [illegible] shielding me from school and reading, that when I was 16 I started reading the Bible really carefully," Angie explains. "And I realized I wasn't living what I was saying. Everything changed then."

Angie says as a new believer, her major spiritual influence was the music of Keith Green and his ministry, No Compromise. Now, at 21 years of age, she [illegible] worked on me, and I finally decided to go [illegible] singing a chance. I guess it all worked [illegible]

Miss Angie's Myrrh debut, 100 Million Eyeballs—which mixes crunchy guitars, happy pop tunes and Angie's slight, angelic voice—reflects the sounds or a few of her favorite performers, including '60s pop phenoms [illegible] and the Go-Go's. "Right now, on my way to [illegible] Right now I'm just really digging the Go-Go's. It's fun to do that song from my childhood. I also love everything Fred Gone's Poss is Kerbel Wheaton who sings [illegible]

[illegible] testimony for [illegible] me in my life when I became a Christian. I didn't understand what God was all about until I read the Bible. I wrote that song for Him. It's also autobiographical [illegible] friends know that just [illegible] saved, the rest of life [illegible] It's saying that though [illegible] to catch me. He won't [illegible]

—Danielle Lee Aderhold



The Huntingtons

"Stand by Me is, like, my favorite movie of all time," says Cliff Powell, The Huntingtons' rhythm guitarist, explaining the group's photo on the sleeve of their new CD, Fun and Games. "Stand by Me is very much the story of my own personal childhood. Four friends walking around doing stupid stuff, not having much money and wondering what's going to happen to them when they grow up."

That assessment works just as well to describe The Huntingtons' music. Virtually every song on Fun and Games is about young love, or the many ways that boy meets girl, loses girl and mends a broken heart, while learning that some things just aren't right with the world. The songs display an innocence missing in most modern pop, while keeping enough tongue-in-cheek humor to appeal to fashionably cynical hipsters.

Much of The Huntingtons' appeal also stems from their infectious punk-pop, a blend of catchy melodies played lightning fast with user-friendly sing-along choruses, reminiscent of The Ramones, Screeching Weasel and MxPx. In fact, Mass Giorgini, the producer of Fun and Games, is one of the architects of the modern punk-pop movement in the mainstream.

The Huntingtons' relationship with Giorgini began when, on a whim, the band called up directory assistance in Giorgini's hometown and secured his home phone number. Cliff says that, after an initial conversation, they mailed him a copy of their first album, Sweet Sixteen, and demos of new material to audition.

"He called me back about a week later and said, You guys are an extremely good band. I definitely want to work with you."

Having an experienced producer on board, Cliff says, helped The Huntingtons take their music to a level where it can be appreciated by a larger audience.

In fact, the band has drawn fire from many Christian listeners for not being more openly religious in their lyrics. Cliff says The Huntingtons are just trying to cover different territory.

"The Christian music that matters to me these days usually doesn't have a [specific] message," Cliff says. "Now, I'm not going to tell bands not to [talk about ministry] because it totally needs to be said. But, mostly, Christian music is heard by Christians. And Christians don't need to hear about how they need God because they already know God."

—Brad Caviness

P.O.D.

With the release of their sophomore effort, Brown, P.O.D. demonstrates that they have been growing spiritually and musically.

"We believe that it is essential to concentrate on Jesus first and focus on what He has done in your life," explains vocalist Sonny Sandoval.

Along with Sandoval, Noah Bernardo, Jr. (drums), Marcos Curiel (guitar) and Tra Daniels (bass) have been playing together for about five years. "God is doing radical things," Daniels says. "If we continue to stand firm in the things we believe in, the bottom line is that we will see people get saved."

Touring has been high on P.O.D.'s agenda. Recently, the band has had opportunities to go out with Soulfood 76 and The Insyderz.

"Going on the road is awesome," Sandoval says. "We all made the band our full-time employment last summer. We said OK Lord, this totally has to be You, and God is giving us numerous opportunities."

In addition to touring across the country, P.O.D. also enjoys playing local gigs. "We play in a variety of settings, including parks, festivals, at the beach—whatever," Sandoval confirms.

As far as classifying the band's sound, "Some people say we sound like Rage Against the Machine," offers Sandoval. "Others say we're rap core. But our sound is really a product of where we're from—San Diego, Calif."

Brown is certainly grounded in that reality. The song, "Live & Die" talks about the environment where they grew up, amidst gangs and crime, though the song concludes that God is bigger than any circumstance or environment. In "Preach," the band drives home its creed—"With the power, with the love, with the boldness/Look in my eyes and remember who told you this/Payable on Death gonna hit ya hit, man/Talk all you want but I don't fear any man."

Sandoval feels the band members are like family. "If God said, It's over, we would still fellowship together. We are like brothers."

Does P.O.D. have a message for their fellow Christian artists? "Focus on what God has done in your life and give it back to the Lord," Sandoval urges. "He has given you an awesome love and if you demonstrate that, people will see it."

—Ginny McCabe

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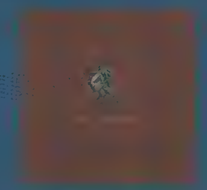

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HOW TO USE THIS PAGE

1. Cut along dotted line.
2. Fold in half.
3. Slip into jewel case.
4. Put your right foot in.
5. Put your right foot out.
6. Put your right foot in.
7. Shake it all about.

14. The Huntingtons **"Alison's The Bomb"** Flying Tart 2:32
©1997 Jambox (BMI)
It's not 1977 ... but don't tell Cliff Powell that! Turn back the clock 20 years and enjoy this shameless paean of love to a girl so perfect she could only have been sent by God.

15. All Star United **"Bright Red Carpet"** Reunion 3:49
©1997 Bridge Building Music (BMI), a division of Brentwood-Benson Music Publishing
Back in January, *7ball* proclaimed All Star "a smash hit," and they're certainly riding the red carpet to success. Check out this pop confection with a little kick to the flavor.

16. Dear Ephesus **"Portrait"** BulletProof 4:38
©1997 Gray Dot Songs
An appearance at the Orlando G.A.S. Fest last spring was quickly followed by that city's Dear Ephesus signing with Gray Dot's BulletProof imprint. You'll detect shades of Seattle mixed with the soul of the South on this driving ballad.

17. Living Sacrifice **"Reject"** Tooth & Nail 3:34
©1997 Thirsty Moon River Publishing, Inc. (ASCAP)
This Little Rock, Ark., band has totally reinvented itself for its latest outing, *Reborn*. Call it "smart metal" or "metal that matters" or just great rock music.

18. P.O.D. **"One Day"** Rescue 3:38
©1996 Catalina Music Group (ASCAP)
P.O.D. is one of few bands successfully combining rap and hard core music. Now that Brown is receiving increased exposure, the group is poised to capture a much-deserved larger audience.

1. Sixpence None The Richer **"Love"** 3:54
©1997 le tigre sur un ballon publishing (ASCAP)
After a two- year recording hiatus, Sixpence–Matt Slocum, Leigh Bingham & Dale Baker–return on a new label with a self-titled release, which features this shimmering interpretation of 1 Cor. 13.

2. Common Children **"Eyes of God"** Tattoo 3:22
©1997 New Tattoo Music (BMI)
You might call *Delicate Fade* an "anti-grunge" album. Vocalist/songwriter Marc Byrd steers partners Hampton Eugene and Drew Powell in a (mostly) softer direction on this outstanding sophomore effort.

3. Every Day Life **"Pushing"** Alarma 2:35
©1997 Broken Songs/Killpass' Publishing (ASCAP)
American Standard is the second Alarma disc from Tedd Cookerly and company. "Pushing" is just a taste of the intensity you'll find within.

GAS Collection CD Volume 3

GAS Collection CD Volume 3

[INSERT]

9. Jennifer Knapp **"Undo Me"** Gotee 3:21
©1997 Gotee Music/West Hudson Music (BMI)
She's not in Kansas anymore, though they tell us that's the name of Knapp's Gotee debut. Bearing a passing vocal resemblance to fellow Kansan Melissa Etheridge, Knapp sings with grit and writes with brains.

10. Ghoti Hook **"My Bike"** Tooth & Nail 3:19
©1997 Spinning Audio Vortex, Inc. (BMI)
The lead-off track from the band's second T&N disc, *Banana Man*, will have you singing "I-yi-yi-yi-like my bi-yi yi-yike" in no time.

11. Soulfood 76 **"Heavy"** Freedom 2:40
©1997 Malaca Music/Slick Jackson (BMI)
Soulfood 76's *Velour (retrospective)* revisits the band's like-titled early demo disc. A little remastering puts a fresh shine on this appropriately-titled gem.

12. Havalina Rail Co. **"Twilight Time"** Jackson Rubio 4:33
©1997 Hairy Desert Pig Music/High Art For the Working Class (ASCAP)
A pinch of jazz, a dash of classical, a little swing and a lot of imagination add up to a terrific third album for HRC. In the tradition of jazz giants like Brubeck and Ellington, *Russian Lullabies* contains impressionistic music inspired by Eastern Europe.

13. The Corbans **"Claim"** Organic 3:31
©1997 Soul Glow/Rose Island Music (SESAC)
This Arizona trio made a demo so doggone good that somebody had to sign 'em ... so Organic Records did. Their 3-piece format may remind you of Model Engine, while their vocals sometimes recall Plankeye. Not bad influences for your debut outing.

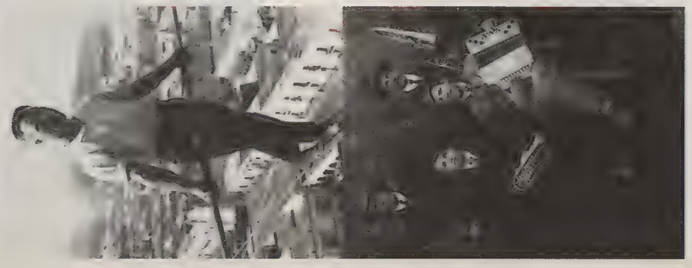
4. Fold Zandura **"Deep Surround"** BEC 3:18
©1997 Spinning Audio Vortex, Inc./Nowhere Music (BMI)
FZ finally drops *Ultra Forever*, their BEC debut, and it's a pop masterpiece. Shards of guitars and other beautiful noise characterize "Deep Surround."

5. Model Engine **"Scarred But Smarter"** SaraBellum 4:24
©1997 5 Minute Walk Music, a division of 5 Minute Walk Records, Inc. (ASCAP)
Black Eyed Sceva is gone, but songwriter Jeremy Post and bassist Brad McCarter remain. *The Lean Years Tradition* is the title of their first disc with drummer Erik Herzog. "Scarred But Smarter" is a great example of Post's lyrical smarts.

6. Value Pac **"Nothing"** BEC 3:04
©1997 Spinning Audio Vortex, Inc. (BMI)
Also bowing on BEC is Value Pac, with Jalapeño, a red hot rock effort that's miles away from their punk debut.

7. Rose Blossom Punch **"A Step Into the Dark"** SaraBellum 4:00
©1997 5 Minute Walk Music (ASCAP)
Poor Old Lu's Aaron Sprinkle finally gets a chance to stretch his songwriting muscles. As vocalist/writer and guitarist on *Ephemere*, he's brilliant.

8. Blackball **"All God's Children"** Metro One 2:50
©1997 Solis Deo Gloria Publishing/Metro One (ASCAP)
For their second disc, *Hope*, Chris Scott (Precious Death) and the boys dig deeper into the funk, and come up with a mix that sounds like Sublime playing the soundtrack to old *Starsky and Hutch* episodes.



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Third Day

Fans of Third Day's self-titled debut on Reunion Records should prepare themselves for the growth that is displayed on the band's sophomore release, Conspiracy No. 5. The Atlanta-based band upped the aggression ante somewhat, while still retaining their penchant for melodic hooks.

Of course, three years have passed since much of the material on the first album was recorded for the band's independent project. So you would expect the band to mature during that period, especially given the amount of time they have spent on the road. The songs on Conspiracy No. 5 have a dynamic, energetic feel, which is enhanced by singer Mac Powell's richly textured voice.

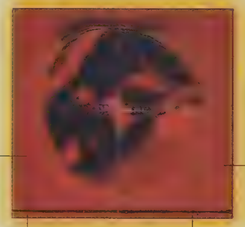
The driving rock of "Have Mercy," "More To This" and "You Make Me Mad" show some serious musical muscle. The twin guitar attack of Brad Avery and Mark Lee plays off the percussion section of drummer David Carr and bassist Tai Anderson well, creating a wall of sound that has texture and depth.

The ballads also have some punch. "More Than I Deserve" starts out with a simple acoustic guitar, building to a full band production by the end of the chorus. A similar approach is used on "Gomer's Theme." Based on the story of the prophet Hosea's wife, the music accentuates the bittersweet tale.

Powell, the primary lyricist, tends to write in a fairly straightforward fashion. He looks both inward and outward, mixing introspection [as in "Give Me A Reason" and "More Than I Deserve"] with songs about relationships ["How's Your Head?" and "Mad"]. As he demonstrated on Third Day, Powell can write a pretty decent praise song. He repeats that feat on Conspiracy No. 5 with the cuts "My Hope Is You" and "Peace."

With 13 cuts clocking in at more than 57 minutes, those not familiar with Third Day will find this a good introduction to the band. Fans of their previous work should welcome their maturing with open arms. The band has improved on its strengths while diminishing its weaknesses—and that's always a good thing.

—Beth Blinn



Conspiracy No. 5
Reunion

Fold Zandura

With their new project, Ultra Forever, Jyro Xhan, Jerome Fontamillas and Frank Lenz, have effectively driven the final nail in the coffin of the band that used to be Mortal. Gone are even the vestiges of industrial noise that were left over on *Return*; they've been replaced by intricately produced and intelligently choreographed electronic music.

What is not missing is the wondrous, experiential songcrafting. By writing songs on the piano instead of on the guitar, incorporating lots of samples and electronics, and stressing personal perspectives, Fold has created an exceptional listening experience. Layering sound on sound and utilizing first rate musicianship, Fold Zandura's sophomore effort sounds like a cross between King's X and the Alan Parsons Project.

But don't get the impression that Fold has gone soft. The opening cut, "La Futura," slithers in with a careful electronic wail, and then kicks in with a thunderous, driving drum roll followed by slashing guitar licks accompanied by distorted vocals. The whole mood of the song evokes emotional images of a Hollywood-crafted future that is intriguing, yet intimidating—just the kind of place depicted in movies like Blade Runner or Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome.

The driving intensity continues through much of the first half of the album, punctuated by brief interludes that give the listener time to ponder the beauty of a well-turned phrase. Consider the tender love song, "Please Believe": Please believe that I never wanted to hurt you/Please forgive anything I said that was untrue/Now it's too late to fill a space you've taken away.

While Fold spends considerable time dwelling on human relationships, they do not ignore spiritual matters. "Jesus Eternal" is a sweet hymn of adoration, while "Starwood" ponders the mystery of creation: A million suns are shining/A thousand rivers rushing/memories returning to me/We are something out of nothing.

Strong pop-rock hooks entangled with full-bore guitars and electronic noise, combined with lush orchestrations pushes Ultra Forever solidly into the forefront of modern music. This project should earn Fold Zandura the credibility they deserve.

—Mike Parker

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Jars Of Clay

"This is the story of how Much-Afraid escaped from her Fearing relatives and went with the Shepherd to the High Places where perfect love castest out fear." So begins Hannah Hurnard's classic allegory, Hinds' Feet On High Places. It could easily be the story of Jars Of Clay's sophomore effort, Much Afraid.

Exploring themes of total dependence on Christ, shattered human relationships and God's strength made perfect in our weakness, Jars effectively makes the trip with Much Afraid to the High Places and at the end of the journey find themselves equally transformed with her into Grace and Glory.

For anyone who may have questioned the phenomenal success of Jars of Clay's first album (nearly 2 million units and counting) a cursory listen to Much Afraid should lay any doubts about their talent to rest. This is the follow-up album most groups only dream about. Pairing the group with superstar producer Stephen Lipson (Annie Lennox, Sophie B. Hawkins) gave Jars the opportunity to refine and polish their slightly alternative signature sound to a velvet edge. This is smart adult pop, in the territory of Sting or Seal. The playing is exquisite, the harmonies are tight, and lead vocalist Dan Haseltine has never sounded so good.

Once again, the songwriting takes center stage with literate, emotive blank verse set to music which is simultaneously intriguing, beguiling and captivating. This album is distinctly Jars of Clay, yet it is a Jars of Clay that has had two years of Cinderella success to deal with. Experiences both good and bad have forced them to grow, to mature, to ripen—the treasure within becoming more evident and more obvious in the music.

Much Afraid takes you on a journey; a journey to the High Places. For Jars of Clay, like Grace and Glory, "This is the beginning of a new song altogether."

—Mike Parker

Much Afraid
Essential

Value Pac

When they first broke on the national scene last year, the music of Value Pac—with its shouted vocals, its big chunky guitar chords, and its rat-a-tat drumming—was called punk. Somehow, though, it's hard to place Value Pac—or much of today's so-called punk for that matter—within the neat confines of this definition. Christian punk seems to have come full circle with the likes of Value Pac. It began with Altar Boys (which exemplified the energy of The Clash married to a stronger sense of melody), evolved into the authentic thrash of The Crucified, and has come around again to Value Pac.

Value Pac sings the songs on Jalapeño like 3-minute heart-to-heart talks with the kids that come to their shows. However, don't expect the lyrics on this CD to explain the theological mysteries of the universe. For example, "Preacher Man" talks about one of those street preachers we've all laughed at from time to time, only the singer of this song has come back to thank that urban evangelist for his faithfulness: My life was over, he sings, then he helped me to my feet. Not exactly C.S. Lewis, but it rings true with experience.

Much like the jalapeños Value Pac's album was named after, this music is probably not recommended as a steady diet item, but if you want to spice up the stale nachos your CD collection has become, then throw this sizzler in the box and have plenty of cool liquid refreshments handy.

—Dan MacIntosh

Jalapeño
BEC Recordings

Zilch

More than any band to debut in recent memory, Zilch has quite a bit of seasoning behind it. As anyone who caught dc Talk's last tour knows, the work of Jason Halbert, Mark Townsend, and Otto "Sugar Bear" Price helped give that group a modern rock edge. But to dismiss Zilch simply because they're backing musicians to "a giant pop group" would be a mistake. With a modern power pop vibe similar to All Star United, Zilch may lack All Star's lyrical innovation, but they do deliver some zingers.

"In the Sky" gives clever responses to Joan Osborne's "One of Us" and Dishwalla's "Counting Blue Cars" respectively: She asked if God was just a slob (like us). Maybe something there is lacking, and Let me tell you all my thoughts (on God, 'cause I just met with Him this morning). In "Christiana," Price's trance-like voice warns the believer not to become too comfortable in the church pew. "Bap!" stresses the importance of being a true friend, while "Hero Zero" is a wacky cover of the School House Rock track.

Townsend's guitars and Halbert's keyboards take turns out front with neither overpowering the other or the fine bass work of Price, while a horn section spices up several of these way-catchy arrangements.

Whether this project ever reaches platinum status or not remains to be seen. In the meantime, Zilch should begin to make a name for itself, outside the enormous shadow of that other band.

—David Bumgarner

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Eager

While listening to the debut from Eager, it's impossible not to think of PFR. Some of the immediate comparisons come because of the guitar-heavy nod to such classic rock bands as Badfinger, as well as the vocal harmonies and arrangements. Perhaps it's because PFR alum Patrick Andrew, who now shares lead vocals and plays bass in Eager, had a big say in the creative direction of the PFR swan song, Them. In fact, Eager seems to be the next logical step.

While PFR may have cast a long shadow, the band members seem ready for the challenge. Greg Pope, who shares lead vocal duties and plays guitar, matches the strength of Andrew's presence. Guitarist Mark Kloos and drummer Paul Eckberg capably support the two front men. And, most of all, those who didn't like PFR all that much—and thought PFR was only starting to go in the right direction when they broke up—will find this new band Eager to please.

—Curtis Spitzer

Eager
Questar Mission

Model Engine

Every now and then, it's good for a critic to have to pull out a dictionary when writing a review—not for the sake of putting high falootin' words into the text, but for making sure you know what the artist is saying. Model Engine (formerly known as Black Eyed Sceva) frontman Jeremy Post is a guy with a lot to say and he often doesn't express himself in ways you've heard before.

Over the past year, Sceva morphed into Model Engine, mostly, according to Post, because they got tired of explaining the name. They also changed drummers and briefly became a four-piece, but reverted to a trio for the finishing of The Lean Years Tradition. While the album title may reflect its contents, there's nothing lean about the individual tracks.

Post (guitar, vocals), Brad McCarter (bass, vocals) and new drummer Erik Herzog play very intelligent pop music. Although often likened to The Police, the dissonant yet hooky sounds of XTC might be a better comparison. Herzog's tricky cadences often dictate not only how Post sings but how he constructs his rhyme schemes.

Lean Years, with its themes of band dissention ("Weathervanes"), romantic tension ("Scarred But Smarter") and Post's impatient quest for personal holiness ("Drawing Lines"), is not an especially cheerful album, but neither is it morose and depressing. Songs such as "Anonymous F" and "Suture," in particular, borrow liberally from the psalmic tradition of recounting one's woes, then seeking the Lord's help to grow.

On only their second full-length album, Post and company successfully walk the line between being clever and too smart for their own good.

—Bruce A. Brown

The Lean Years Tradition
TwoDollarBill Records

(not actual cover)

Miss Angie

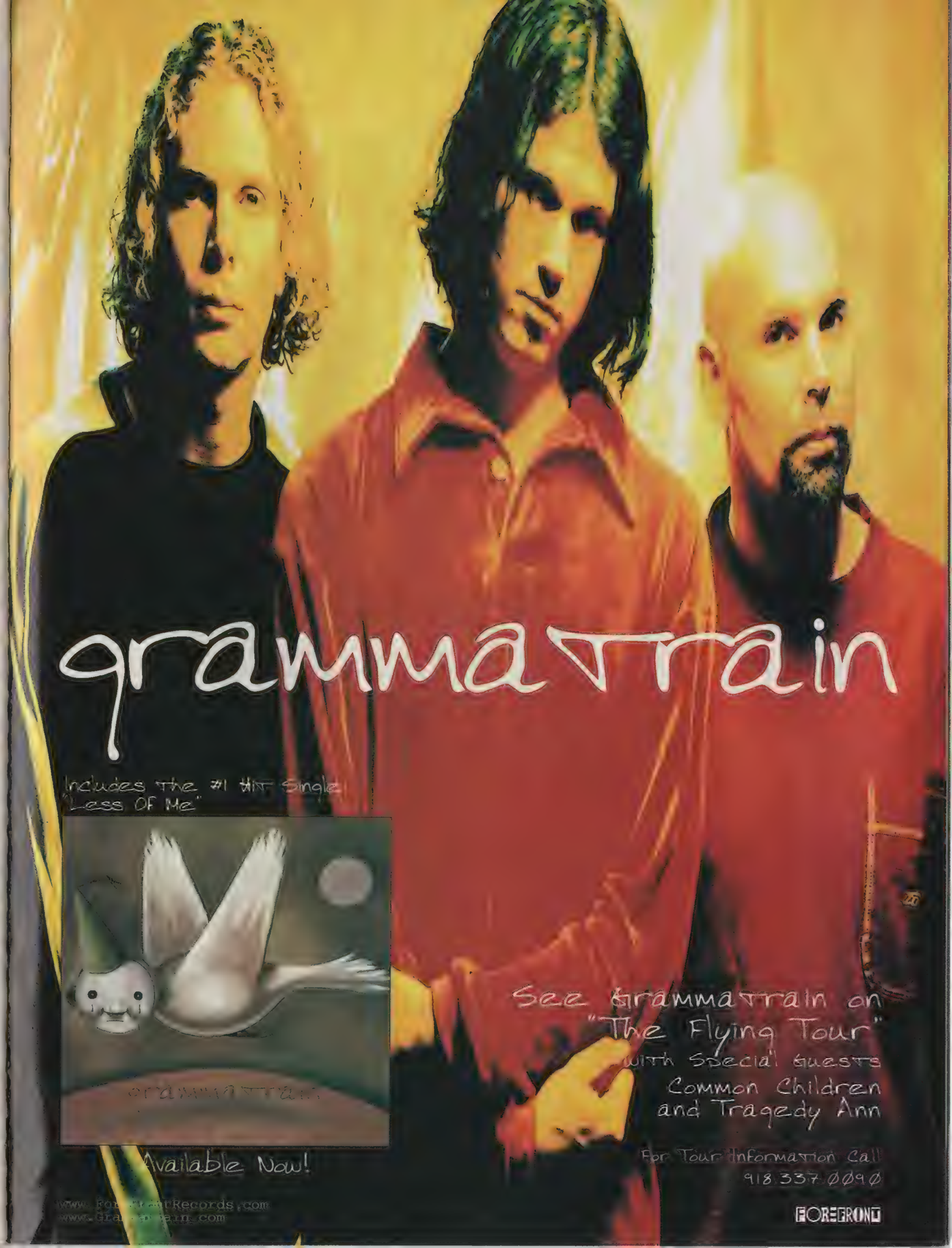
100 Million Eyeballs, the debut project from 21-year-old Angie Turner (professionally known as Miss Angie) is playful, sprightly, and a lot of fun to listen to. Turner sports a light, airy vocal delivery which meshes effectively with slightly distorted, modern rock guitars that define the band's sound. With Oran Thorton, Shawn Turner and Dan Fritz (johnny Q. public) sharing production credit with veteran David Zaffiro, it's perhaps no surprise that Angie sounds like Cyndi Lauper singing lead for jQp.

This is a project that is, by it's own admission, aimed at church kids who "don't have a clue about who God is," and as such, the lyrics are much like bumper stickers: Bumper stickers sometimes make you smile; sometimes make you mad; sometimes make you think. In a world of sound bite mentality, sometimes all you have time for might be a bumper sticker.

So credit Miss Angie with "sticking" to such theologically-challenging topics as eternal praise to a holy God ("100 Million Eyeballs"), the war between the new and old nature ("Trampoline") and dependence on Christ ("Lift My Eyes Up").

—Mike Parker

100 Million Eyeballs
Myrrh



LSU

Even Mike Knott's most ardent supporters will usually admit that his work is uneven. And that's the case with Knott's new LSU project, Dogfish Jones. When given the opportunity to do this record, he could have taken the money and delivered an armload of unused Aunt Bettys demos. Instead, he delivered a Homeric tale told through Irish sailing songs filtered through psychedelic rock. Dogfish Jones is the story of a sailor who hits the high seas to seek adventure and fortune.

Musically, the record is an eclectic grab bag of sounds. Some of the ideas work and some are less effective. Knott's father contributes a pair of Irish sailing/drinking songs ("Storm at Sea" and "The Boyos") to the record to establish the setting. They're good (maybe even great) songs for the genre. But they're a little out of place, perhaps intentionally so, on a rock record. Lounge jockey Gene Eugene plays Hammond B3 on several cuts, and it's a new twist on the raging guitar sound that is LSU's signature. But as the hook to over half the record, it gets monotonous as well.

Knott tries to cover a lot of territory, musically and thematically, on Dogfish Jones. It's a good record, considering he only spent a couple of weeks on it from conception to finished master. But given more time to simmer, Dogfish Jones could've been a great record.

—Brad Caviness

Dogfish Jones
Flying Tart Records

(might be the cover. we're not sure.)

Living Sacrifice

Rarely has an album title been so appropriate. Living Sacrifice is indeed Reborn on its debut for Tooth & Nail Records. Gone are the death metal and grindcore references that made the band a joke to most fans of other musical genres. In their place are nods to artists like Helmet, Tool, Korn, and Six Feet Deep. The change is not imitative, but a natural extension of the band's previous image.

The music of Living Sacrifice is brutally intense, even violent in its sheer volume. But they have gone from the cartoonish approach of a cheap horror flick to the numbing chills of a psychological thriller. Sonically, they incorporate everything from industrial tape loops and samples ("Something More," "Reject") to acoustic guitar (used as an intro to the superb tracks "Threatened" and "Sellout").

Famed Little Rock producer Barry Poynter helps expand Living Sacrifice's sonics, which, along with the band's improved songwriting and streamlined performance approach, puts them in a new category—metal that matters.

—Brad Caviness

Reborn
Tooth & Nail

The Merbabies

The Merbabies, a threesome from Long Beach, Calif., run a pretty loose ship musically, with a lazy guitar, dull bass and drums that more often than not lack a certain snap. Add that to the fairly muddy production work, and overall you've got a nice, numb wall of noise.

The first track, "Slowdown," is precisely the wrong song with which to lead the record. It sounds like vocalist Chris Bowden is singing through a towel from behind the bathroom door while the rest of the band jams down the hall in the kitchen.

Things pick up a bit with "Merry Mixer," an instrumental pop confection, evoking the beaches and surf of the band's home. Suddenly, you're right in the middle of a Hawaii 5-0 episode, and just up the beach Moondoggie and Gidget are surfin' in the U.S.A.

For all the fuzz of the first half of the record, the second half picks up considerably. The vocals and lyrics become a bit stronger, the band is tighter, and the guitar riffs occasionally sound a bit like early Neil Young.

This album sounds as if it was recorded as a work in progress. With a bit more effort, though, there is potential here for a really fun band in the tradition of Model Engine. Their lack of zing is the only thing holding The Merbabies back.

—Danielle Lee Aderholdt

The Merbabies
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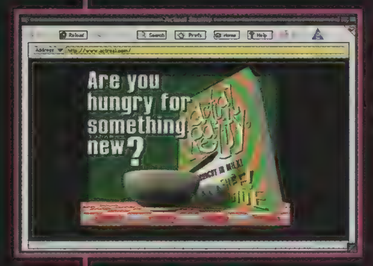
COLLISION point

By Doug Brumley

Welcome once again to *7ball*'s regular visit to the world of multimedia. This time we're looking at a soon-to-be-released CD-ROM project called Actual Reality. By presenting Bible lessons and teen discussion in a 3D computer-generated world featuring Christian music and Christian artists, the interactive CD-ROM aims to be a product for teens that is both spiritually relevant and entertaining.

Actual Reality (www.actreal.com)



For Christian teens, wholesome electronic entertainment available is in short supply. Video games and computer games continue to test the limits of morality while most Christian projects have targeted a much younger audience—until now.

"Teens are willing to rent Nintendo games and buy CD-ROMs, but there is very little with Christian content out there," says Kevin Theessen. Theessen is the producer/creative director/writer for Actual Reality, a forthcoming CD-ROM from Horizons Interactive that hopes to give 12- to 20-year-olds something they haven't had before—a hip, entertaining and appealing way to explore religious questions and issues.

"This is a huge niche. If we don't fill it with something godly, it's going to get filled in other ways," continues Theesen, who recently paid a visit to *7ball* Laboratories to show off an early version of the product. The CD-ROM is the brainchild of Ray Neu, a youth pastor with 15 years in youth ministry, and Don Lee, founder and president of Horizons Companies.

"[Neu] had written a bunch of Bible lessons," says Denise Niebisch, co-producer/writer of Actual Reality. "But he wanted to develop a more relevant vehicle to communicate to the youth and thought perhaps a CD-ROM would be best."

The content is presently being finalized and tweaked, but the end result will focus on Bible lessons and teen-oriented issues while featuring many Christian musicians speaking about those issues as well as giving personal testimonies. The inclusion of artists such as Sarah Masen, The Supertones, Caedmon's Call and Newsboys will undoubtedly bring more attention to the project.

Actual Reality is structured around a 3D-rendered city which is a cross between Myst and Veggie Tales. A point-and-click interface allows movement between the disc's numerous themes, which explore such questions as "Who is Christ?" on a frank level. And there's plenty of humor throughout to keep things from becoming stale.

While this may be the first Christian project for Horizons, the company has clout with such corporate clients as McGraw-Hill, Motorola, The Limited, and Abercrombie & Fitch. And there are bigger plans for Actual Reality than a space on your Christian retailer's shelf.

"If it's sold just in Christian bookstores we've failed," says Theessen. He cites that the project needs to prove itself in the Christian market to have a better chance for general market release, but Actual Reality has already earned test exposure in some of the nation's heavy hitting retailers: Media Play, Best Buy, Wal-Mart, Kmart and Sam's Club. Theessen, who has demonstrated a beta release to artists, labels, and retailers over the course of the past few months, says the response has been overwhelming. Many viewers have no point of reference and are amazed by the technology while more experienced computer users have expressed enthusiasm that such a product is finally reaching the marketplace.

This Actual Reality CD-ROM is ideally the first in a series, and from the early buzz successive discs seem likely. According to Niebisch, later projects will deal with deeper discipleship issues, building on the broad introductory approach taken in the first installment. But there may be more than CD-ROMs in store for the Actual Reality license. Talks are under way for a television deal and merchandise based on the project. Check this column for updates and a review of the finished product.

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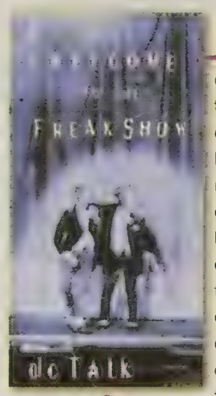

It's amazing to stop

and think of the stunning artistic growth of dc Talk since their debut only four records and three long-form videos ago. The territory they have covered can only be explained by the fact that dc Talk—Toby McKeehan, Michael Tait and Kevin Max Smith—are, first and foremost, a pop group. In the best sense. With that fact firmly in hand, they've been free to grab handfuls of vibe and props from each musical incarnation and reinvent their pop music into a whole new form.

However, they have raised the standard—of their own work, as well as of an entire industry—high enough that it's becoming difficult to give them all the credit they deserve: After all, since that stunning jump from Nu Thang to Free At Last, the subsequent improvements have lost their shock value.

Welcome to the Freak Show—dc Talk Live in Concert, though, raises the bar so dramatically that even general market concert videos will find it hard to compete. Welcome to the Freak Show succeeds at the daunting task of communicating a whole live concert experience through a tiny box. The project exploits the strengths of video while creating a work of art which shares special and electric moments that will surprise even concert-goers.

The tour itself was pretty amazing: these three men have developed to the point where each has the stage presence to carry a whole show; the backing musicians fulfill their tasks with the right dynamics and creativity to propel the art to new heights; and the physical staging is on par with any show this side of U2.

On top of that, the video presentation matches the kinetic energy with exactly the right sorts of edits, angles and bonus clips, sweeping in and out of the concert action as brilliantly as every concert video should—but few do. Extra juice comes from the especially disconcerting effect of cutting wildly from different performances of each song—the editors pay special attention and use each cut for maximum impact.

The track listing runs the gamut from some well-placed covers (Charlie Peacock's "In the Light," as well as a clever segue from The Beatles' "Help" into "So Help Me God"), a generous helping from Jesus Freak and a few dc Talk oldies to round it out. The soundtrack album, all 78 minutes of it, also includes a frisky cover of R.E.M.'s "It's the End of the World As We Know It."

The end combination—great music, great video, great footage from the stage and on the road—is outstanding. Credit directors Ken Carpenter and Eric Welch for making this more than a simple "concert video"—while some simply set a camera down and leave the home audience at the mercy of the camera angle, these men give the home viewer far more vantage point than any ticket-holder ever had.

Welcome to the Freak Show finds dc Talk at the top of their game as entertainers and ministers. More importantly, it shows they're savvy enough to surround themselves with smart people who, rather than simply filling slots or painting by numbers, bring an extra level of creativity and vision. This package is as good as I have ever seen. That and the soundtrack album make for a brilliant one-two punch.

—CsW

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Truth Clothing

Success is often reliant upon being at the right place at the right time. This certainly holds true for Truth Clothing. Eric Hannah, whose background is in film, and Scott Brinson, who has record company experience, met while Hannah was working on a video for a rock band, and Brinson was working for that band's record label. The two found they had a lot in common, and soon created their own clothing business.

It just so happened that the band working on the aforementioned video didn't have anything distinctive to wear. "Scott and I had been talking," recalls Hannah, "and he had been dabbling in some ideas for some clothes, and I had been dabbling a little bit in clothing as well because I had just made a Christian ski film called Extreme Attitude. Immediately, there was this relationship through the clothing. He had a vision, and I had a vision, and we ended up making clothing for this band."

When people saw the video, viewers liked what the band was wearing. The two realized immediately there was a demand for these newly-designed outfits.

Of course, T-shirts with Christian messages on them is not a new concept. But Truth didn't want to be just another company producing shirts with spiritual slogans on them. "We wanted to reach people through quality products," states Hannah. "When we came into the Christian marketplace, there were basically two types of T-shirts—black & white and gray. They were very billboard-ish with big themes—you know, gift-buying shirts. But we came in with a clothing line that nobody had even come close to seeing or doing before in this industry." This included the development of the unique Truth logo.

"One of the first shirts we came out with just said Truth on it, and the second 't' was a cross (still the company logo to this day). As a result of that, people began to ask questions. People would ask, Hey, what's truth? And these kids and fashion-oriented people, who thought they'd just bought it because it was a very cool Christian shirt, were now in a position where they could say, Well, Truth is clothing, or it's Jesus Christ."

This established the Truth clothing line—which appeals to both the extreme sports culture and to many other "fashion-conscious" individuals—as a witnessing tool especially fit for today's youth.

"We feel this generation is going to be reached by building relationships and through conversation," clarifies Hannah, "and that's what the clothing seems to do."

And Hannah knows the music culture continues to play a leading role in the Truth success story. "We market through dc Talk, through Newsboys, we have a great relationship with Michael W. Smith, and now we're doing Stephen Curtis Chapman," lists Hannah. By designing clothing for the artists with the Truth logo, they help promote the artist, while at the same time promoting their own line.

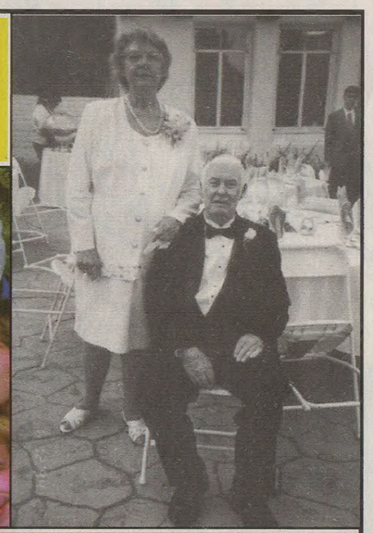
In addition, Hannah hasn't let his film skills go to waste. "We have a lot of stuff that goes on ESPN and ESPN2," says Hannah. Here, you can see videos of skateboarders and the like doing their thing in Truth wear."

All of these marketing opportunities point to an ultimate promotion of more than just a keen fashion sense: they ultimately lead to supporting a lifestyle.

"We try to promote the Christian lifestyle," summarizes Hannah. "You gotta live the truth, and then you can share the truth, and then you can wear the truth."

—Dan MacIntosh

"Grandpa wore out both knees on their first record, I guess I better order him a new plastic hip..."
Frank's grandma



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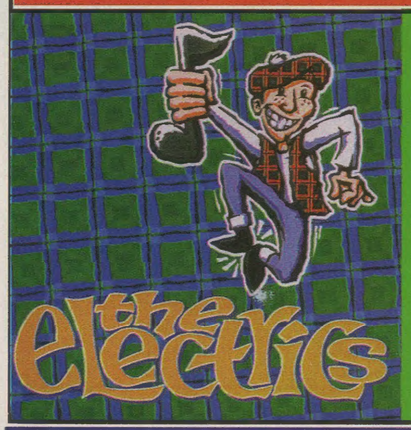

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PURE rock report

Rhythmic

1. A.J. MORA — I Lift My Hands (N Soul)
2. WORLD WIDE MESSAGE TRIBE — The Real Thing (Warner Alliance)
3. MAXIMILLIAN — Deeper Than Most (N Soul)
4. GOTEE BROTHERS — Celia (Gotee)
5. E.T.W. — Ain't Nobody Dyin' (But Us) (ForeFront)
6. ECHOING GREEN — Oxygen (Nyx)
7. HYDRO — Touch The Spirit (N Soul)
8. GRITS — People Notice'n' Me (Gotee)
9. T-BONE — Keep On Praisin' (Metro One)
10. GRITS — Mirage (Gotee)

Loud

1. SIX FEET DEEP — Steadfast (R.E.X.)
2. LIVING SACRIFICE — Reject (Tooth & Nail)
3. STRONGARM — These Times That Try Men's Souls (Tooth & Nail)
4. ZAO — Times Of Separation (Tooth & Nail)
5. ETHEREAL SCOURGE — Warcry (Rowe)
6. OVERCOME — Reconstruction (Tooth & Nail)
7. NAILED — Drowning (Rugged)
8. FRANK'S ENEMY — Torturer (Cling)
9. FOCAL POINT — Neglected (Tooth & Nail)
10. ETHEREAL SCOURGE — Restoration (Rowe)

Modern

1. SILAGE — Watusi (Sub-Lime)
2. SUPERTONES — Supertones Strike Back (BEC)
3. SWITCHFOOT — Chem 6a (re:think)
4. PLUMB — Crazy (Essential)
5. THE ALTERED — Low (Curb)
6. GRAMMATRAIN — Less Of Me (ForeFront)
7. INSYDERZ — I Say (Gumshoe)
8. FIVE IRON FRENZY — Where Zero Meets 15 (5 Minute Walk)
9. BELIEVABLE PICNIC — Spaceman (Absolute)
10. DIME STORE PROPHETS — All About You (SaraBellum)
11. CHRISTINE GLASS — Crazy All Around (Tattoo)
12. SKILLET — My Beautiful Robe (Ardent/ForeFront)
13. SQUAD FIVE-O — Always The Same (BulletProof)
14. BROOMTREE — Save You (Rustproof)
15. BLEACH — Child of Sod (ForeFront)

Rock

1. GRAMMATRAIN — Less Of Me (ForeFront)
2. SWITCHFOOT — Chem 6a (re:think)
3. REALITY CHECK — Masquerade (Star Song)
4. PLUMB — Crazy (Essential)
5. GUARDIAN — Coffee Can (Myrrh)
6. CHRISTINE GLASS — Crazy All Around (Tattoo)
7. BELIEVABLE PICNIC — Spaceman (Absolute)
8. DIME STORE PROPHETS — All About You (SaraBellum)
9. SILAGE — Watusi (Sub-Lime)
10. REBECCA ST. JAMES — You're The Voice (ForeFront)
11. SUPERTONES — Supertones Strike Back (BEC)
12. JOHN COX — Sunny Day (Questar Mission)
13. ALL STAR UNITED — Bright Red Carpet (Reunion)
14. SKILLET — My Beautiful Robe (Ardent/ForeFront)
15. THE ALTERED — Low (Curb)

modern rock reporters

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HUNTINGTONS

Bl@h, Bl@h, Bl@h

Although spring is traditionally thought of as a time of rebirth and rejuvenation, it's summer when most of us recharge our batteries. Many of us are out of school, so the time off is an extended one. And even those of us with year-round occupations slip away for a couple weeks, or ditch work now and again for an afternoon ball game or a movie matinee.

But for those of us in this industry, the summer months mean one thing: music festivals. We actually begin getting deeply involved in these yearly events during the winter. Those plans begin to come to fruition sometime in April, go into full swing by July and taper off around Labor Day.

I would guess that most everyone who reads *7ball* has been to some sort of festival, whether a weekend event or a five-day endurance test like Creation or Cornerstone (if you haven't, you must reevaluate your priorities...). As *7ball* scholars will be quick to note, this magazine was first deployed by *7ball* lab technicians at the 1995 Cornerstone festival. So, I suppose in dog years, we're teenagers...

The music festivals are, for us, one of the proving grounds of *7ball*. Are we keeping up with the latest, greatest music? Are we ahead of the curve or behind that "other" billiard number? Are we being responsible stewards of the platform God has given us? Are we being attentive to your comments and criticisms? As much as we love your snail mail, email and phone calls, the face-to-face encounters with you at these events help us get to know you on a personal level.

"There's No Place Like Home"

But for me, the festivals show what a wondrously intricate mechanism the family of God is. After attending nearly all the Cornerstone fests and enjoying the enormous Creation fest for the first time this year, I'm certain that God does much business with His people at these and similar events. The diversity of the flock is displayed as music lovers of every taste absorb a bit of each other's culture (often involuntarily). But the spirit of cooperation invariably reigns. Attendees can be seen freely exchanging clothes, food stuffs, camping supplies and even musical instruments. One of the most heartening sights is to watch a festival-goer wander past a stage and come away a huge fan of an artist that he hadn't heard of an hour before. And nearly every artist I've spoken to agrees that the festival season (besides being a boon to them financially) is also the time when they connect most directly with their audience.

As a thousand different personality types let down their guard though, I have to ask myself, What's wrong with this picture? It reminds me of going to church camp as a kid. You subconsciously knew that you could say and do the most outrageous things—good or bad—because in a couple weeks, or a month, you'd probably never see these people again.

Now that you're settling back into your routine, let me ask you: how are the people in your church or household any different from those "strangers" you met at these festivals? The answer is, they're not. In fact, they're even more important to you. They're your parents, your pastors, your youth group leaders, your boyfriends and girlfriends, your husbands and wives—they're the people God has placed in your life. Just as you let down your guard to make new friends, don't close up your heart and take old friends for granted. If you're an Every Day Life fan who was willing to sit through a set by The Waiting simply because it was part of a festival program, don't switch off the stereo when your brother or sister drops in a Jars of Clay disc. And even if you find it difficult to appreciate music that's on the hard core tip, turn the volume down a notch and give the lyrics another chance. Sometimes when God speaks, He speaks loud.

A few years ago songwriter Terry Taylor offered "Some Friendly Advice," a bit of which was: Do a jig / slop a pig ... Read the Good Book / Try a skyhook ... Keep a vow / milk a cow ... Get baptized / go skydive. In other words, as the chorus states, Something that you wouldn't ordinarily do/Something just a little bit different for you. There can't be anything more out of the ordinary than falling in love with thousands of strangers every summer ... except maybe falling in love again with those closest to you.

by Father Mosh

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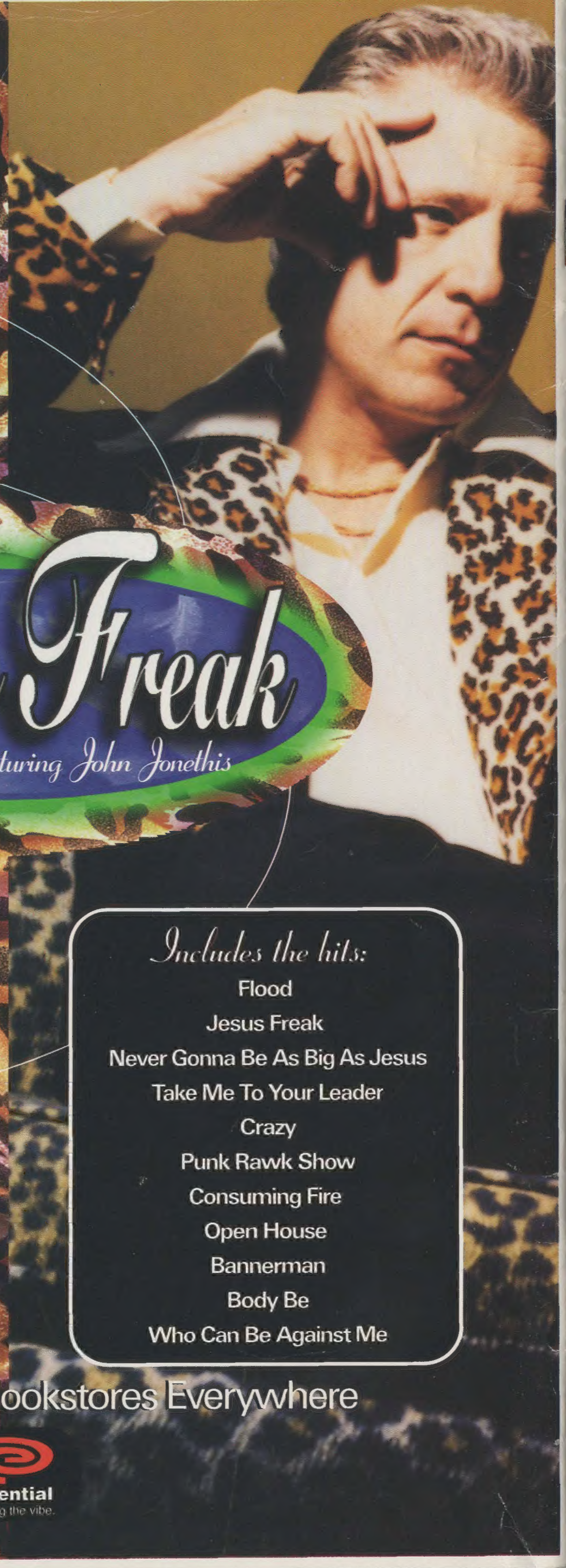

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